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The Annual Newsletter
of the
ITALIAN STUDIES LIBRARY GROUP

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Chris Michaelides (1949-2017): a personal remembrance

Andrea Del Cornò

Chris Michaelides, who passed away on the 11th of June after a short illness borne with great dignity, served as ISLG Chairman from 2011 to 2017. Chris was one of the co-founders of the Group and was involved with it since its inception in 2001, initially serving as Secretary and E-liaising Officer. Under his Chairmanship the ISLG went from strength to strength, the ISLG Bulletin established itself as a reputable and scholarly publication and the ISLG Annual Lecture, customarily held at the British Library, became an important event for anyone with an interest in Italian matters. Chris's dedication and commitment to the ISLG were remarkable and his support for the Group remained constant and unswerving.

Curator of the Italian and Modern Greek Collections at the British Library, Chris (BA First Class Honours in Italian and French, University of Hull, 1971-1975) published extensively and contributed regularly to several academic publications and journals, including the *Burlington Magazine*. In addition to his witty editorials, for the 2008 ISLG Bulletin Chris wrote a significant essay on *Avant-garde Italy, 1900–1937* — a piece inspired by the exhibition on Futurism, *Breaking the Rules*, held at the British Library, which he had helped to curate. We are honoured to publish the bibliography of his various writings in the current issue.

I personally have fond memories of Chris and his gentle nature. On one particular occasion, in Rome, I was most annoyed at the delay to our return flight to London. Chris, more prosaically, was simply disappointed, wishing he had spent more time at the Galleria Borghese or at the Scuderie del Quirinale where he had gone to see an exhibition. In London, I recall the many visits to the Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art, which almost invariably began with a coffee and a conversation on a variety of topics in the *giardinetto*, the peaceful little garden he liked a lot. During these visits, I would listen to Chris and make mental notes about exhibition and art catalogues I ought to acquire for the London Library, articles I should read, and films I should see. Often his sense of humour would shine through some Italian expressions — *démodé* at times — which, I guess, not even many native speakers would use so appropriately. Confronted by the tiresome, almost obstinate, difficulties posed by Italian bureaucracy in getting permission to publish some ISLG Bulletin illustrations, Chris would exclaim: *ma che assurdità!*, or once, recalling the theft of a bag he was carrying which had nothing in it but a volume of Proust: *ben gli sta!*, was his ironic

remark on the thief, who would have found the contents both disappointing and puzzling. Chris was a gentle, charming and unassuming person, a fine scholar, devoid of any haughtiness or presumptuousness, as if unaware or dismissive of his own erudition.

I feel sure that these sentiments will be shared among all ISLG Members, past and present: the ISLG will remain indebted to Chris for years to come and his contribution to its activities will continue to be treasured.

To this, on a personal note, I wish to add: *Ciao Chris, e ancora, veramente, grazie di tutto!*

Andrea

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From deluge to the digital: fifty years of research and conservation in Florence since the 1966 flood

Donal Cooper

The majority of today's visitors to Florence surely do not notice the modest plaques dotted around the city's streets, set well above head height, marked with a simple horizontal line and bearing the same standard legend: 'Il 4 novembre 1966 l'acqua d'Arno arrivò a quest'altezza.' Florentine history is peppered by repeated floods of the Arno — at once the silvery river, the 'Arno d'argento', of popular song and Dante's 'accursed ditch' — but 1966 was the highest and most violent. The grim hierarchy is inscribed on the corner of Via di San Remigio, where the 1966 plaque stands well clear of the fourteenth-century inscription marking the 1333 flood.

The human toll in 1966 is now accepted as 35 fatalities in the city and its province, mercifully low compared to the several thousand that are thought to have perished in 1333 but a number that encompasses tragic stories like the three-year old girl swept away by the torrent at Sesto Fiorentino and the disabled pensioner trapped in her apartment behind Santa Croce by the rising waters. The devastation wrecked on the city's historic centre, artistic patrimony, archives and libraries was severe and captured the attention of the international media in a way that a disaster for cultural heritage had never done before. November 2016 marked a half century since the 1966 flood. The commemorations last autumn were more muted than the events staged for the fortieth anniversary in 2006, a sign perhaps that the first-hand experience of the flood is gradually slipping from the city's collective memory. Arguably, however, the flood remains central for understanding today's Florence, for the catastrophe forced a new appreciation of the city itself as an historic artefact, with buildings and books, archives and artworks as an integrated and ultimately fragile whole. The scale and urgency of the conservation challenges in the flood's aftermath also led to new approaches in the conservation of books, sculpture and paintings, areas where Florence has since developed world-leading expertise.

To understand the flood's aftermath, it is necessary to revisit the day itself — Friday 4th November 1966 — and the events as they unfolded. It was a national holiday, armed forces day, which was a fundamental factor in limiting the lethal effect of the catastrophe. Had the flood struck as Florentines were travelling into work many more

Cimabue's Crucifix in the Refectory at Santa Croce in the aftermath of the flood

lives would undoubtedly have been lost. Rain had been falling heavily for many days but twelve hours or so of particularly intense precipitation filled the tributaries of the Arno upstream. Florence itself is a natural bottleneck for the Arno river system, the same reason that makes the river bridgeable at this point. The majority of the city lies on the Arno's flood plain, the same factor that explains the historic floods mentioned above. But the situation in 1966 may have been intensified compared to earlier centuries by the construction of hydro-electric dams upstream in the post-war years. It was later said (although also consistently denied) that the emergency opening of the dam at Levane near Arezzo around 2am by engineers terrified of an imminent collapse accelerated the unprecedented tsunami of river water hurtling towards the city at colossal speed (over 60 mph according to some estimates). The city was already gradually flooding when the main force of the water hit in the small hours and by first light the river had breached the parapets of the Lungarni and was submerging the city as far as the Cathedral and the train station, where many of the fatalities were trapped in the underpasses between the platforms.

Most of the city's bridges had recently been rebuilt following the mining of the historic spans by the retreating German army in August 1944 and they withstood the river's surge remarkably well. But the Ponte Vecchio, the most massive structure and the sole surviving medieval bridge, acted like a dam, accumulating massive quantities of debris on its eastern side. Its collapse seemed inevitable until witnesses describe a heavy goods vehicle smashing into the bridge with great force and by immense good luck clearing some of the wreckage rather than further weakening the arches, allowing the rampaging Arno to pass more freely downstream. Had the Ponte Vecchio been overthrown by the waters, it would have acted as a true dam, forcing more of the river over the Lungarni to cause yet more devastation.

As one would expect, the photographic record of these early hours when the Arno was in full flood is fragmentary and the quality of the images more variable than those recording the aftermath. But an American tourist called Joseph Blaustein was staying near the Ponte Vecchio and had several rolls of colour slide film, still a relatively rare commodity at the time. His unique visual record of the height of the flood formed the basis of the 2013 exhibition *Tutti i colori dell'alluvione* and were acquired by the Archivio Storico Comunale for the Museo della Città. Meanwhile photographic sequences taken around Santa Croce, one of the worst affected areas, captured the gradual ebbing of the flood water from around midday over the course of the afternoon. The lake of the piazza gradually subsided to reveal jumbled clusters of cars and other vehicles that had been swept along and piled up at every angle by the swirling waters.

As the flood receded, military vehicles — the same ones that should have been on parade that day — began to navigate the streets. Impromptu pharmacies and food stalls were set up for those trapped in the city centre, and slowly news of the

catastrophe started to reach the outside world. Amazingly, the city's principal newspaper *La Nazione* produced an edition on the morning of the 4th November, printed shortly before the paper's offices flooded. The headline simply read: 'L'Arno straripa a Firenze' ('The Arno overflows in Florence'). The 5th November edition, printed on the presses of a sister paper in Bologna, better absorbed the scale of the tragedy: 'Firenze devastata dall'Arno: un disastro senza precedenti nella storia della città.' It is estimated that the flood deposited a tonne of mud for every inhabitant of the city and the force of the surge ripped up the streets. One of the more surreal photographs from those days documents the journey of a lamp-post on the Lungarno, torn out of the street and borne along — concrete foundation block and all — before arriving, still standing upright, in a wholly new location.

Alongside the humanitarian tragedy of the flood it was immediately clear that the city's art treasures had been extensively and grievously damaged. The Soprintendente Ugo Procacci and the head of the Uffizi conservation studio Umberto Baldini worked tirelessly from dawn on the 4th at the city's main gallery. That morning their small team, acting as a human chain and with enormous courage, removed the portraits from the Vasarian corridor directly above the Ponte Vecchio. The bridge shook beneath their feet as it took the full force of the river and the impact of its debris. While the Uffizi's main galleries were thankfully at the top of the building, many works were held in Baldini's conservation workshop on the ground floor of the courtyard, including panels by Giotto, Simone Martini, Fra Angelico and Botticelli. Some were easily portable but others were not. Damaged panels and canvases were taken upstairs and laid flat in the main galleries to prevent paint loss as their supports swelled from absorbed water and moisture.

The situation was worst in and around Santa Croce as the enormous but low-lying Franciscan convent was engulfed by the flood water, leaving a thick layer of mud everywhere in the church. Here the waters were over six metres deep at the flood's peak. The great casualty was Cimabue's crucifix in the refectory. It was covered by the flood water which dissolved the binding medium of the picture surface, causing significant and irreversible loses. The photographs of it being carried out of Santa Croce by soldiers and volunteers, so evocative of a Via Crucis, caught the public imagination. While the high water mark thankfully fell short of Giotto's frescoes in the church itself, Taddeo Gaddi's murals, in the refectory alongside Cimabue's cross were not so fortunate. Another casualty was Giorgio Vasari's enormous panel painting of the *Last Supper* painted in 1546 for the nuns of Le Murate and displayed in the Santa Croce museum: it spent twelve hours in the flood water.

The residue left by the flood was all the more damaging since the river water and mud were mixed with all kinds of debris and, once the flood hit the city, with significant quantities of hydrocarbons, especially heating oil stored in cellars and at ground level. This can be readily perceived in the slick, film-like surface of the water

in many photographs, and by the high-tide marks that stained artworks and rubble alike. The oil stains on Florentine marble sculptures presented one of the most pressing conservation challenges as conservators sought to avoid the stones fully absorbing the toxic sludge. Some of the most successful treatments were devised by Kenneth Hempel, conservator of sculpture at the V&A, who was dispatched to Florence by his director John Pope-Hennessy in the wake of the flood. Hempel perfected his strategy by testing marble samples in approximations of the Florentine mud in South Kensington and perfecting the composition of sepiolite poultice packs while he waited for government clearance to depart for Italy (a necessary bureaucratic hurdle as the V&A was still officially part of the civil service). The success of the new techniques that he and others developed can be readily seen in the before and after photographs of the marble reliefs from Baccio Bandinelli's choir precinct in the cathedral which were semi-submerged by the flood and badly stained at their mid-point by the high water mark.

The international media of the day started to publicize the Florence flood as a disaster for world heritage. *Life Magazine* photographer David Lees flew into the city by helicopter on the 5th November; his image of the conservation of Taddeo Gaddi's fresco of the *Last Supper* in the refectory at Santa Croce would appear on the magazine's front cover for 16th December with the title 'Heroic Job of Rescuing a Great Heritage: A Mission of Restoration after Italy's Devastating Floods'. In Britain the *Sunday Times* magazine supplement for 8th December 1966 dedicated sixteen heavily illustrated pages to the city's endangered artworks, accompanied by articles on Florentine art and history by John Shearman and John Hale which explained to their readers 'why Florence matters'. Press coverage like this spurred many students to depart for Florence and join the so-called mud angels — the 'angeli del fango' — or to volunteer from one of the multiple conservation groups being established in Florence's museums, libraries and archives.

Perhaps the strongest appeal came through cinema. Franco Zeffirelli, Florentine born and internationally renowned, was filming in Florence on the morning of the 4th November and captured the flood in full flow. Zeffirelli had flown by helicopter from Rome at first light with a film crew he had demanded from the state broadcaster RAI, having been phoned before dawn by his sister in Florence who described the water filling her street just to the east of the Duomo.

He quickly edited the footage into a short 50 minute documentary, initially entitled 'Per Firenze' and released in English as 'Florence: Days of Destruction'. Both Italian and English versions were set to a voice over by Richard Burton, reputedly speaking from a phonetic script for the Italian release. In America screenings of Zeffirelli's film were used to raise funds by the Committee to Rescue Italian Art (CRIA), a voluntary organization which had been founded within a week of the flood by concerned scholars, curators and conservators. With Jackie Kennedy as honorary president and

Markers for the 1333 and 1966 floods on the corner of Via di San Remigio and Via de' Neri

promotional films by Senator Edward Kennedy and Elizabeth Taylor, the committee would raise almost $2.5 million for Florence (roughly $20 million in today's money) over the following seven years.

CRIA's early efforts were concentrated on the effort to save the city's paintings. Panel paintings in particular presented unprecedented challenges. In many cases wooden supports had swelled in size as they had absorbed water, causing the picture surfaces to crack and flake. Having sprayed the pictures with fungicides to arrest the onset of mould, the Soprintendenza restorers sought to stabilize their paint surfaces by coating them with Japanese paper mixed with Paraloid B-72, an acrylic resin. These films by and large did their job in preventing further losses, although the B-72 resin would later prove harder to remove than envisaged. Around 250 paintings were moved to the Limonaia in the Boboli gardens, the sheltered spaces the Grand-Dukes of Tuscany had created in the eighteenth century for their lemon trees. Here Umberto Baldini and his colleagues attempted to achieve a controlled climate for the pictures, initially with high levels of humidity which would then be slowly lowered to effect a very gradual normalization of conditions in the hope of avoiding radical shrinkages as the panel supports contracted. On Christmas Eve 1966 Pope Paul VI, having toured the city and celebrated Mass below Brunelleschi's cathedral dome, ascended to the Limonaia to pray above the prone crucifix of Cimabue before returning to Rome.

In fact the environment of the Limonaia proved difficult to control and early in 1967 Baldini took the radical decision to shift his conservation effort to an entirely new site at the Fortezza da Basso, the sprawling and disused sixteenth-century fort on the opposite side of the city close to the railway station. The paintings were moved there in May before the summer heat made conditions in the Limonaia impossible to regulate. Florence had possessed a dedicated restoration studio since 1932, when Ugo Procacci had founded the city's Gabinetto del restauro, but the move to the Fortezza transformed the status of Florence as a centre for conservation. In 1975 the Fortezza laboratory was officially merged with the city's historic hard-stone and sculpture

conservation studios to form the Opificio delle Pietre Dure (known simply as the OPD), an institution which now leads the world in the conservation of panel paintings and frescoes. In 1972 the Fortezza laboratories were already able to stage the exhibition *Firenze restaura* (or *Florence restores*, a pointed use of the present tense) to publicize the post-flood conservation efforts, one of the very first exhibitions anywhere dedicated to the restoration of artworks. The exhibition displayed Cimabue's crucifix in the process of consolidation, with its picture surface removed from its panel support.

The daring experiment of removing the paint layers from the wood of the cross, achieved without any losses and facilitated thanks to the high quality of Cimabue's original preparation, allowed the Fortezza conservators to work on the different elements of the picture independently. The different strata of the picture were then reunited with the help of an intermediate layer of resin and fibre-glass. Baldini and his team confronted the grave lacunae in the painting with the innovative technique of chromatic abstraction, a nuanced evolution of Cesare Brandi's earlier 'tratteggio' approach. Chromatic abstraction used complementary colours and directed hatching to encourage the eye to fill in the gaps of the painting without disrupting the overall experience of the artwork or constituting a restorer's fiction. The restored cross was reinstalled in Santa Croce in November 1976 to mark the tenth anniversary of the disaster and in the early 1980s it toured the world as the international face of the ongoing conservation effort, arriving at London's Royal Academy in 1983.

The city's damaged frescoes presented their own problems and here again the situation was especially severe at Santa Croce, where Taddeo Gaddi's murals in the refectory had suffered alongside Cimabue's crucifix. The soaking of the walls with flood water led to a swift increase in salt levels, which would then bloom on the fresco surface, disintegrating the picture surface. In the immediate aftermath of the catastrophe restorers resorted to the established expediency of detaching damaged frescoes. In some cases their achievements were astonishing. At Santa Croce on 10th October 1967 Gaddi's *Last Supper* — a full 122 square metres of fresco — was detached from the western wall of the refectory in one piece without a single break in the pictorial field. By 1968 around 3,000 square metres of fresco had been detached in Florence. Some of these newly portable murals would arrive in London in 1969 at the Hayward Gallery as part of the touring exhibition *Frescoes from Florence* designed by Carlo Scarpa and intended to raise awareness of the ongoing conservation effort.

The National Library of Florence in the aftermath of the flood

For the most urgent cases, conservators had little choice but to detach damaged frescoes before their surfaces turned to powder. But the unique challenges presented by the flood also encouraged the development of new solutions. The ubiquitous damp prevented the application of the acrylic resins which had been favoured since the early 1960s for the consolidation of mural surfaces (a blessing as it turned out, since these resins are now understood to have very harmful longer term effects which are difficult to reverse). Instead, the local restorer Dino Dini and Florence University chemist Enzo Ferroni began to experiment with the use of barium hydroxide to stabilize porous surfaces. This solution, sprayed onto fresco surfaces, eliminated harmful sulphates and consolidated the carbonate structure of the fresco, effectively halting the chemical processes that were reducing the plaster of the fresco to powder. Dini's and Ferroni's new technique was first applied on a large scale to Fra Angelico's Chapter House *Crucifixion* at San Marco with brilliant results and has since become one of the standard techniques in wall painting conservation. The collaboration of the conservator Dini and chemist Ferroni in many ways typified the broader integration of traditional restoration expertise with scientific analysis that may be seen as one of the most important legacies of the flood. It is largely thanks to Dini's and Ferroni's work that we can still appreciate many Renaissance fresco cycles as true murals rather than as inevitably compromised detached panels.

The flood hit the city's libraries and archives especially hard. Florence's Biblioteca Nazionale is located facing the river beside the convent of Santa Croce and its book

stacks at the time occupied the ground floor and several basement spaces. On the day of the flood itself no one could reach the library as the fast-running waters engulfed it. When the director Emanuele Casamassima and his staff were able to clear a path through the mud the following day they found a vast mass of collapsed shelving and sodden books. The water had swollen the volumes which in turn either forced apart their shelves or distorted themselves into strange accordion-like forms. The librarians were confronted with the enormous task of separating the pages of books before the mud-soaked volumes dried solid. The quantity of material was difficult to measure: the initial selection of historic books requiring urgent intervention was in the region of 120,000 volumes. The Soprintendenza released the Forte del Belvedere for the task and equipped it with 12,000 metres of shelving. As well as being marked by the toxic flood water, numerous books had also been stained by their tannin bindings and the migration of ink. Many were effectively stuck solid as the glue in their bindings had dissolved, spread and then re-dried. As with the city's paintings, the onset of mould was a pressing danger. It quickly became apparent that pulling the books from their bindings and drying the pages individually was the best strategy.

To this end truck-loads of material were taken to the boiler house at Florence railway station or to cigarette factories in Umbria where they occupied kilns designed to dry tobacco leaves. There individual folios were hung on lines in the manner of a colossal codicological laundry. The separated and dried pages were thus saved but much of the material would have to be washed again on its return to Florence to clean away the stains. At first this work was undertaken using improvised wash tubs but over the course of 1967 specialist basins were developed as well as forced drying cabinets for the mass desiccation of unbound pages.

It was at the Biblioteca Nazionale that the British equivalent of the CRIA — the Italian Art and Archives Rescue Fund (IAARF) — made its major contribution. Ably energised by Sir Ashley Clarke, former British ambassador to Rome, the Fund dispatched a team of book conservators to Florence including Peter Waters of the Royal College of Art (later senior conservator at the Library of Congress), his wife Sheila the renowned calligrapher, the book restorer Anthony Cains and Christopher Clarkson from the Bodleian Library. The British team helped to devise diagnostic check-cards that used a sign system so as to be intelligible by the multi-national team of volunteers and specialists that had descended on Florence by the start of 1967. They were also instrumental in developing a sophisticated division of labour, so that willing amateurs could hone a single skill rather than struggling to acquire several. The institution of these production-lines allowed the restoration effort to remain based in Florence (despite many offers from overseas institutions) with the main reading room of the library transformed into a conservation workshop, ensuring the perfection and application of a consistent methodology. Meanwhile a Ghanaian chemist sent by the British Museum, Joe Nkrumah, supervised the sterilization of both the books and the

work spaces at the Biblioteca. The British team, some of who remained in Florence until 1973, also promoted the use of traditional techniques and materials when rebinding books whose original covers could not be saved. As a reader in today's Biblioteca Nazionale it is especially satisfying to find a requested book arrive with a carefully sewn limp-vellum cover (specially sourced from Enrico Gentili in Rome, Europe's leading parchment dealer) embellished with Sheila Waters' elegant calligraphy. These restored bindings, which pioneered the use of traditional materials in modern book conservation, are worthy heirs to Florentine craft traditions and beautiful creations in their own right.

Like the Biblioteca Nazionale, the main holdings of the Archivio di Stato were close to the river and in the path of the flood. The state archives were housed in 250 rooms on the ground and mezzanine levels of the courtyard of the Uffizi. The Arno flooded 40 of these spaces up to the height of two metres. It is estimated that over 70,000 archival volumes were damaged, including some 11,000 that were destroyed completely. In the immediate aftermath folders of documents were laid out in the open air under the loggias of the Uffizi, but were soon distributed with the help of the Italian army to a range of state institutions in Prato and Arezzo. Confronted with an unprecedented challenge in terms of the type of damage and scale of material effected, the conservators experimented with different techniques. At Prato archival *buste* were spread open and dried under infra-red lamps, a practice that was swiftly discontinued. Soon the Archivio di Stato followed the Biblioteca Nazionale in using Umbrian tobacco factories (notably at San Giustino) for drying and washing the documents. The employees at these factories, used to cleaning delicate tobacco leaves, proved adept at handling and washing historic paper. By June 1968 all the damaged material had returned to Florence for treatment in a newly established conservation lab at the Uffizi. Its first director, Francesca Morandini, came to London that year with two colleagues to study the conservation methods then in use at the Public Record Office. Between 1967 and 1969 small quantities of historic material, mostly parchments, were sent to other conservation labs across Europe with diverse results — confirming the wisdom of concentrating efforts in Florence itself. Amazingly, the reading room of the archive reopened on the 28th December 1966 but the decision to move the archive to a new location had been reached even earlier, with 2.5 million lire allocated for the project by Rome on 18th November. The new glass and steel building located at Piazza Beccaria designed by Italo Gamberini and Loris Macci finally opened in 1988.

At a distance of 50 years the legacy of the 1966 flood has come into sharp focus. The sheer scale of the calamity provoked innovations in practice and technique in every major field of conservation — manuscripts, archives, printed books, canvas and panel paintings, frescoes, textiles, metalwork, sculpture of every medium — and accelerated the integration of traditional restoration techniques with modern scientific analysis. Many of these developments derived from the difficult decision, taken when Florence

was still on its knees, to concentrate the conservation effort within the city, turning down in the process numerous well-intentioned offers of assistance from institutions across the world. This strategy not only achieved its more immediate aim of ensuring shared standards, it also brought restorers — both experts and students — from across the world to Florence and laid the foundations for the city's emergence as a leading centre in modern art conservation. At a broader level, the experience encouraged academics working on Florence to appreciate the breadth of the city's historic fabric, consolidating Florence's position as a focus for interdisciplinary research across the humanities.

The principal anniversaries since 1966 have been marked by the completion of major conservation projects, starting with Cimabue's crucifix in 1976. In 1986 the OPD dedicated a new exhibition on *Capolavori e restauri* and in 1996 Lippo di Benvieni's crucifix, in many ways a conservation challenge equal to the Cimabue, returned to Santa Croce. In 2006 a series of large sixteenth-century altarpieces, including enormous panels by Francesco Salviati and Agnolo Bronzino, were reinstalled in the same church. In 2016 it was finally the turn of Giorgio Vasari's *Last Supper*, long considered the most intractable case amidst the outstanding restoration projects. The OPD began work on the *Last Supper* in 2004 with the support of the Getty Foundation and sponsorship by Prada. The picture's five panels had been separated since the flood and Vasari's figures had long been hidden behind the protective tissue paper applied in the immediate aftermath, which had then buckled and folded as the drying boards gradually contracted. Thanks to new techniques developed during the extended conservation it was possible for the restorers to recover an unexpected percentage of Vasari's original painting and the final result was a resounding triumph for the Opificio. The painting was unveiled on the evening of 4th November 2016 in a special ceremony in the refectory of Santa Croce attended by the President of the Republic Sergio Mattarella. It is now mounted on retractable chains to allow it to be raised in the event of a future flood. Across town the Florentine fire-brigade draped an enormous Italian tricolour down the full length of the Palazzo Vecchio for the official reception.

The latest Opificio project also has a digital dimension in the form of a virtual reconstruction of the original setting for which Vasari painted his *Last Supper* in 1546, the refectory of the Benedictine nunnery of Le Murate. This convent had been suppressed under Napoleon and its spaces transformed into Florence's principal penitentiary. It was still a functioning prison in 1966 and the prisoners were turned loose by their guards when the flood waters hit, some of them helping with the rescue and relief effort before returning to custody. Today Le Murate has been rebuilt as social housing, a hopeful sign of urban regeneration and community in the face of the lucrative pressures of modern tourism. The digital reconstruction of Le Murate recuperates the multiple strata of Florence's past, including the earlier flood of 1557

as described by the Benedictines nuns who witnessed their low-lying convent engulfed by the waters of the Arno. The experience of the flood is thus linked to a deeper history of Florence and at the same time brought into the digital era. Arguably the application of new technologies to map the city's past and present also draws on the legacy of the flood, especially the awareness in the face of destruction of the full scope of the city's heritage, which has consolidated our sense of Florence as a unique laboratory for historical research, as well as a city of art and culture.

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Sacre rappresentazioni in the British Library: the history of a collection*

Laura Carnelos

The British Library owns one of the largest collections of sixteenth-century Italian *sacre rappresentationi* outside Italy. These texts consist in the dramatization of episodes from the Old and New Testaments, or from the lives of saints and martyrs, written in verse and usually with an angel who pronounces the prologue and the conclusion to the play. Although printed badly and on poor quality paper, these *sacre rappresentazioni* were sought out and collected in Britain especially from the end of the eighteenth century and throughout the following century. In this article I will trace the history of these editions across their various owners until their acquisition by the British Museum Library thanks mainly to Antonio Panizzi, who worked in the library from 1831 to 1866, becoming Keeper of Printed Books and later Principal Librarian.

From the 1760s onwards, the libraries of Italian religious orders and aristocratic families underwent a vast dispersal due both to various local interventions as well as to much larger-scale historical shift, the arrival of Napoleon's troops in the Italian peninsula and the protracted and difficult process of the Unification of Italy. Books disappeared from libraries, were taken as war booty, stolen, discarded, destroyed or sold as wrapping paper.[1] The books that survived were redistributed among other libraries, if considered valuable, or sold to whoever was prepared to buy, if they were duplicate copies or judged worthless. Many of these discarded books found their way outside Italy, often towards England, where interest in Italy and the Italian arts (the visual arts pre-eminently but also books) was growing. Already at the beginning of the seventeenth century, private and public institutions, such as Holkham Hall and

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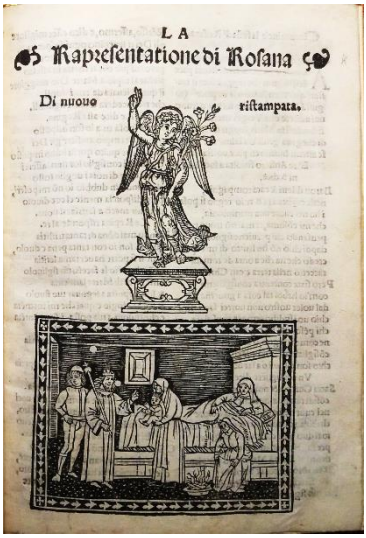
1 Marino Zorzi, *La Libreria di San Marco: libri, lettori, società nella Venezia dei dogi* (Milan: Mondadori, 1987); *Al servizio dell'«amatissima Patria»: le memorie di Lodovico Manin e la gestione del potere nel Settecento veneziano*, ed. by Dorit Raines (Venice: Marsilio, 1997); Andreina Rita, *Biblioteche e requisizioni librarie a Roma in età Napoleonica: cronologia e fonti romane* (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2012); Cristina Dondi, Dorit Raines, and Richard Sharpe, *How the Secularization of Religious Houses Transformed the Libraries of Europe, 16th–19th centuries* (forthcoming).



La rapresentatione di Rosana (Firenze, 1557). © British Library Board. C.34.h.16

the Bodleian Library, were collecting Italian books.[2] During the eighteenth century, an authentic *Italophilia* arose in England: Italy became an inspiration for English travellers who toured the country as part of their education or for pleasure. Books and antiquities were acquired and brought back to be displayed in houses and libraries. It is certain that the Grand Tour deeply influenced bibliographical interests and bibliophile collecting in England, but there were also other motives for English interest. Between the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, while Italian libraries — both private and public — were ready to sell their books in large quantities, often as collections or in bulk, English bibliophiles became deeply interested in acquiring some categories in particular of those discarded books. In this period, English collectors were ready to spend vast sums of money to buy a single copy of a much sought-after edition. It was the golden era of *bibliomania* — as Thomas Frognall Dibdin defined it in his work of the same title — an era which reached its climax probably in 1812 when the celebrated Roxburghe sale took place.[3]

According to Arnold Hunt, the century from 1750 to 1850 'represents a profound shift in literary taste, and has had an equally profound and enduring impact on the collecting of books and the formation of libraries.'[4] Rarity became a principal factor in determining the commercial value of a book. Before then the price was based on size and format — the bigger the book the more expensive it was — but rarity and condition then emerged as the most important features to be taken into account in estimating the market value of a book. Secondly, first editions became more desirable than subsequent ones and, thirdly, there was the gradual establishment of a new canon of 'collectible' books.[5] If private libraries in the mid-eighteenth century, such as those of

2 A. M. Gáldi, 'William Roscoe and Thomas Coke of Holkham', in *Roscoe and Italy: the Reception of Italian Renaissance History and Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. by Stella Fletcher (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 195–214; Mary Clapinson, *A Brief History of the Bodleian Library* (Oxford: University of Oxford, 2015).

3 George Spencer-Churchill (1766-1840), Marquess of Blandford, paid the sum of £2,260 for the editio princeps of the Decameron in 1812. See Ed Potten's introduction to Robert Harding Evans, *White Knights Library: Catalogue of that Distinguished and Celebrated Library Which Will be Sold by Auction* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014).

4 Arnold Hunt, 'Private Libraries in the Age of Bibliomania', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland*, Volume II, *1640–1850*, ed. by Giles Mandelbrote and K. A. Manley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 438–58 (p. 438).

5 Hunt, Private libraries, pp. 438–39.

Joseph Smith (1674–1770) and Revd Thomas Crofts (1722–81),[6] were mainly classical libraries with editions of Greek, Latin and Italian literature prominently included, in the later eighteenth century the demand for fifteenth-century books (i.e so-called incunabula, from the first six decades of printing), works in their *editio princeps*, in Gothic or black letters and with texts in the vernacular grew rapidly. Certainly, these interests and fashions could not have flourished without the large quantity of early printed books which flowed into England after the suppression of the Jesuits in the 1760s–70s and the upheavals of the French Revolution, to satisfy the increasing demand from wealthy British collectors. Entire collections were transferred to the UK. It was this enormous quantity of books which suddenly became available which gave English collectors the possibility of choosing what most interested and attracted them. Even 'the popular literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including ballads, jestbooks, murder pamphlets, and all the other genres of cheap print' began to hold a fascination for them.[7] Among these types of books, there were also many *sacre rappresentazioni*. According to Paola Ventrone, who has made a study of the civic theatre in Florence, *sacre rappresentazioni* were a 'pedagogical invention' created by the Archibishop and the Medici in Florence in the 1440s to educate young people as perfect Christians and citizens. They were written by individuals in the Medici entourage who used the forms of oral communication as a way of discussing current events and issues, and of promoting Medici politics.[8] Even though composed for such a specific purpose, these works enjoyed a long success throughout Italy printed and reprinted from the fifteenth until the first half of the nineteenth century.[9]

During the course of the sixteenth century, various printers in Florence and in Siena issued them both separately, as individual pieces, and in compilations in larger volumes. The largest of these undertakings was carried out in Florence by the Giunta firm, who published three volumes in 1555, 1560 and 1578 which collected all the

[6] *Bibliotheca Smithiana; seu, Catalogus Librorum Josephi Smithii Angli per Cognomina Authorum Dispositus* (Venice: Pasquali, 1755); *Bibliotheca Croftsiana: Catalogue of the Curious and Distinguished Library of the Late Reverend and Learned Thomas Crofts* [...] *Which Will be Sold by Auction by Mr Paterson* [...] ([London: n. pub., 1782]).

[7] Hunt, *Private libraries*, pp. 448–49.

[8] Paola Ventrone, *Teatro civile e sacra rappresentazione a Firenze nel Rinascimento* (Florence: Le Lettere, 2016), p. 142.

[9] Nine *rappresentazioni* had been part of the Remondinian backlist for over a century: Laura Carnelos, *I libri da risma: catalogo delle edizioni Remondini a larga diffusione (1650–1850)* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2008).

La rapresentatione di tre pellegrini [...]. (Firenze, [1585?]). © British Library Board. C.34.h.6.(19)

rappresentazioni which were known about for the pleasure and consolation of Christian souls.[10] Besides being books for performance and reading, they also immediately became objects which were worth collecting. The first collector of *sacre rappresentazioni* was in fact Fernando Colón, who bought twenty-one items in Rome, Genoa and Viterbo at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Seventeen of these were Florentine, two Roman and two, without place of publication, were bought in Viterbo and in Genoa.[11]

Except for one book bought in Genoa in 1530, the collection was mainly put together in 1515 and represents so far as we know the earliest expression of interest in this genre on the part of a non-Italian.[12] One century later, another small collection of twelve *sacre rappresentazioni* printed at the beginning of the seventeenth century was purchased by don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña Conde de Gondomar (1567–1626).[13] Except for one published in Venice 'per Grazioso Percacino' in 1608, the others were printed by Marco Claseri in Serravalle (Venice) in 1605. Mentioned in the index of don Diego's library prepared in 1623,[14] they were probably bought in Venice between 1608 and 1623. Ten of these are now at the Real Biblioteca of the Real Palacio in Madrid.[15] However, the enduring success of this genre can largely be attributed to an Italian theologian and scholar, Leone Allacci (1586–1669), who

10 *Il primo libro di rappresentationi et feste di diuersi santi et sante del Testamento Vecchio, et Nouuo* [...] (In Firenze: nella Stamperia dei Giunti, 1555), CNCE 53303; *Il secondo libro di feste et rappresentationi* [...] (In Firenze, 1560), CNCE 53304; *Il terzo libro di feste et rappresentationi, et comedie spirituali* [...] (In Firenze, 1578), CNCE 53305. The volumes had probably been broken up shortly after the publication as no one has survived entirely. For an overview see Daniela Napoletano and Elena Ravelli, 'Le sacre rappresentazioni della Raccolta Giuntina', *DigItalia*, 6 (2011), pp. 131–36, <http://digitalia.sbn.it/article/view/220/138> [accessed 9 September 2017].

11 Titles and prices are listed and commented by Nerida Newbigin, 'Plays, Printing and Publishing, 1485–1500: Florentine Sacre Rappresentazioni', *La bibliofilia*, 90 (1988), pp. 269–96 (pp. 281–83).

12 Today these booklets are preserved in the Colombina Library in Seville. Klaus Wagner and Manuel Carrera, *Catalogo dei libri a stampa in lingua italiana della Biblioteca Colombina di Siviglia* (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini, 1991).

13 Carmen Manso Porto, *Don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, conde de Gondomar (1567-1626): erudito, mecenas y bibliófilo* ([La Coruña], Xunta de Galicia, 1997), see 'Libros en italiano: tragedias y comedias', and 'Historias fabulosas', pp. 601–03.

14 Only one rappresentazione is not mentioned: *Sac. rappresentation nova* by Luigi Groto.

15 *IBIS: Base de datos del patrimonio bibliográfico de Patrimonio Nacional: Real Biblioteca*, <http://realbiblioteca.patrimonionacional.es> [accessed 9 September 2017].

included *sacre rappresentazioni* in his *Drammaturgia divisa in sette indici*, published in Rome by Vitale Mascardi in 1666.[16] This work, created as the catalogue of Allacci's library, soon turned into a sort of manual for the collecting of Italian dramas and other works intended for performance. Reissued in 1755 by Giambattista Pasquali (1701–1784) in Venice, the *Drammaturgia* appeared in an improved and supplemented edition in order to provide a more comprehensive bibliographical tool for Italian and foreign bibliophiles interested in Italian theatre and rare books. Among these, we find the Italian Antonio Magliabechi (1633–1714), librarian first for the Tuscan Grand Dukes and then, in 1673, for the Medicea Palatina Library in the Pitti Palace; and the French collectors Albert François Floncel (1697–1773), lawyer in the Parisian Parliament, royal censor and minister of foreign affairs, who collected a huge library with more than 10,000 books, many of them rare Italian books;[17] and Louis César de La Baume le Blanc, Duc de La Vallière, (1708–1780), who was fascinated by Italian popular editions.[18] Mentioned by Bartolomeo Gamba as examples of good Italian appearing in the dictionary compiled by the Accademici della Crusca, the *sacre rappresentazioni* attracted also those interested in the Italian language as well as bibliophiles and collectors who were searching for the rarest editions in order to enhance their libraries.[19] In the 1839 edition of his *Manuel du libraire et de l'amateur de libres*, Brunet described the Giunta volumes of these Italian 'mysteries' as 'rare et assez précieux'.[20] Under the name of one of their major authors, Feo Belcari, he explained:

> Belcari est un des auteurs cités par l'Académie della Crusca, et pour cette raison ses ouvrages, qui consistent principalement en Rappresentazioni spirituali, son très recherchés en Italie, et leurs premières éditions s'y paient fort cher. Mais ne

[16] For a brief profile see: Domenico Musti, 'Allacci, Leone', *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, II (1960), <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/leone-allacci_(Dizionario-Biografico)> [accessed 9 September 2015]. A digital copy of the book is available at: <http://access.bl.uk/item/viewer/ark:/81055/vdc_100026268258.0x000001#ark:/81055/vdc_100026268305.0x000002> [accessed 9 September 2017].

[17] J. B. L. Osmont, *Dictionnaire typographique, historique et critique des livres rares, singuliers, estimés et recherchés en tous genres* [...] (Paris: Lacombe, 1768).

[18] Debure, Guillaume, *Catalogue des livres de la bibliothèque de feu M. Le Duc de La Vallière, Premiere Partie* [...]*, tome second* (Paris: Guillaume de Bure fils aîné, 1783). A volume of seven *sacre rappresentazioni* is listed at no. 3788.

[19] Bartolomeo Gamba, *Serie de' testi di lingua stampati che si citano nel vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca posseduta da Gaetano Poggiali* (Livorno: Tommaso Masi, 1813); Bartolomeo Gamba, *Serie dei testi di lingua italiana e di altri esemplari del bene scrivere* (Venice: Alvisopoli, 1828).

[20] The *rappresentazioni* were also termed 'mysteries' or 'miracle plays' in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. J.-C. Brunet, *Manuel du libraire et de l'amateur de livres* (Bruxelles: Maline, Cans et comp.e, 1839).

> croyant pas devoir donner plus d'étendue à son article, nous nous bornerons aux ouvrages cites, et nous renverrons à Gamba, tom. Ier, pag 72-86.[21]

This fashion inevitably reached England where, as we said, British collectors were keen on buying Italian popular books of the sixteenth century. The main bibliophiles in the UK, such as William Roscoe (1753–1831), John Towneley (1731–1813), Richard Heber (1773–1833), possessed in their libraries volumes of Italian mysteries. When they died, this material tended to be dispersed at auction sales. Due to changes in the scope of acquisition policies led by Antonio Panizzi, the British Museum Library turned into a potential buyer.

In 1836 Panizzi was questioned by a parliamentary select committee, appointed to enquire into the condition, management and affairs of the British Museum. Panizzi declared:

> It is of less importance for the Library of the British Museum to have common modern books, than to have *rare, ephemeral, voluminous and costly publications*, which cannot be found anywhere else, by persons not having access to great private collections. I want a poor student to have the same means of indulging his learned curiosity, of following his rational pursuits, of consulting the same authorities, of fathoming the most intricate inquiry, as the richest man in the kingdom, as far as books go [...] I want the Library of the British Museum to have books of both descriptions; I want an extra grant for those rare and costly books which we have not [...].[22]

Panizzi clearly affirmed that a national library should have rare and ephemeral publications which could not be found anywhere else and, for this purpose, he was asking for a special grant to buy books for the library. He also added that these items should all be well bound, catalogued and preserved, even at the cost of restricting reader access to them.

In the year following his appearance before the select committee, Panizzi became Keeper of Printed Books as which one of his duties was the acquisition of both modern and early books. It is probably not a coincidence that, the collecting of *sacre rappresentazioni* began in these years, marking also the application of the new acquisition and conservation policies put in place by Panizzi. The *rappresentazioni* bought during his keepership (1837–1856) were located in special book cases with the shelfmark *C*, reserved for particularly rare and valuable items (as is still the case today). On a shelf of what is now a storage area (i.e. no longer kept separately), there are in sequence two volumes of sixty-six *sacre rappresentazioni* bound in green morocco with gold decorations in dentelle style and twenty-six separately-bound

[21] Brunet, *Manuel du libraire*, I, p. 218 and IV, p. 20. A similar description is found in the following edition, printed in 1842 (I, p. 279).

[22] *Report from the Select Committee on the British Museum: Together with the Minutes of Evidence, Appendix and Index, Ordered by the House of Commons, to be Printed 14 July 1836, Q. 4795*. The italics in the quote is mine.

booklets bought between 1842 and 1847. The two volumes belonged to John Louis Goldsmid (d. 1815) and were purchased in 1819 by Richard Heber. They arrived at the Library probably between 1836 and 1842 thanks to the mediation of Thomas Rodd, a bookseller who bid on behalf of the Library at auction sales in that period.[23] An old shelfmark in the front flyleaf proves that they were placed in the old building and locked in the cases some years later, when the library's shelving was reorganised. Also the books acquired in 1842 and 1844, some of these presumably belonging to the Venetian Maffeo Pinelli (1735–1785) and brought to England by the London bookseller James Edwards at the end of the eighteenth century, were first located in another section of the Library and then closed in bookcases because of their value.[24] Another nine books from Guglielmo Libri's library were added in 1848, after Libri personally informed Panizzi that he was going to sell part of his precious collection.[25]

Except for two later acquisitions of unique copies in 1867, this *C* shelfmark was not used again for Italian mysteries. It is likely that the publication of the first bibliography relating solely to the genre in 1852 compiled by De Batines revealed that those books collected by the British Museum Library were not unique copies.[26] Further acquisitions were therefore arranged in other presses. In 1859 Thomas Boone, another bookseller who acted as an agent for the British Museum Library, offered twenty-six *rappresentazioni* bought at the sale of Borluut de Noortdonck (1771–1857), a Flemish collector who tried to reconstruct the first volume published in 1555 by Giunta as the contents had been broken up shortly after the publication.[27] Another seven plays which had belonged to Borluut entered one year later from the sale of another portion of Libri's library.[28] These booklets were mainly put in the *11426* shelfmark sequence of the library. This location was also used for a large part of Henry Wellesley's collection of religious plays, which entered the library between 1867 and

[23] *A Catalogue of the Curious and Valuable Library of John Louis Goldsmid* [...] *Sold by Auction by R. H. Evans*, ([London]: Printed by W. Bulmer and Co., [1815]), lot 153; *Bibliotheca Heberiana: Catalogue of the Library of the Late Richard Heber* [...] *Sold by Auction by Messrs Sotheby & Son* [...] ([London]: Sotheby's, 1834–1836), lot 2637.

[24] These books have a small dark ink number at the top of the title page and they are mentioned in the *Bibliotheca Pinelliana: a Catalogue of the Magnificent and Celebrated Library of Maffei* [sic] *Pinelli, Late of Venice* [...] *Sold by Auction* [...] *March 2, 1789*[–] [...] ([London: James Edwards, 1789]), 2 March 1789, no. 3578.

[25] *Catalogue de la bibliothèque de M. L**** [G. Libri] (Paris: L. C. Silvestre & P. Jannet, 1847); British Library Archive, Add. MS. 36715, ff. 254-63, Letter from G. Libri to A. Panizzi, Paris, 3 January 1846.

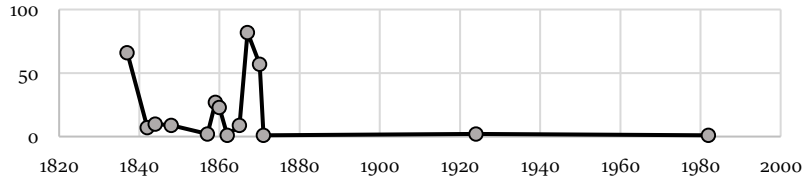
[26] P. C. De Batines, *Bibliografia delle antiche rappresentazioni italiane sacre e profane stampate nei secoli XV e XVI* (Florence: Società Tipografica, 1852).

[27] About the Giunta volumes see note 10 above. *Catalogue des livres, manuscrits, dessins et estampes, formant le cabinet de feu M.* [François Xavier Joseph Ghislain] *Borluut de Noortdonck* [...] *19 avril 1858 et jours suivants* [...] (Gand: van der Meersch, 1858).

[28] *Catalogue of the Choicer Portion of the Magnificent Library Formed by M. Guglielmo Libri* [...] *Which Will be Sold by Auction, by Messers S. Leigh Sotheby and John Wilkinson* (London: S. Leigh Sotheby & John Wilkinson, 1859).

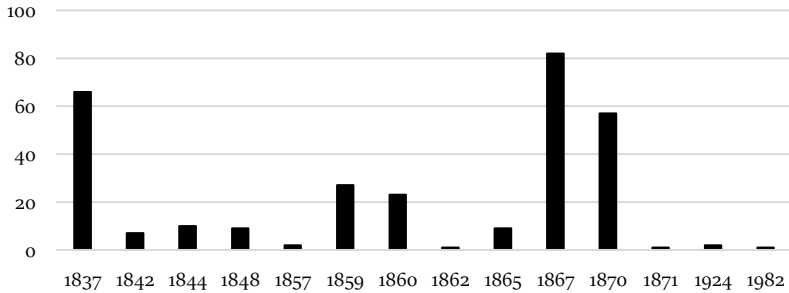
1870.[29] However, to make room for 139 new items, a special subsection of the shelfmark sequence was created, *11426.dd*. Here, the majority of the Library's later acquisitions of *rappresentazioni* are stored.

Sacre rappresentazioni in the British Library (1)



Graph no. 1 represents how the collection of sixteenth-century *sacre rappresentazioni* was gradually formed at the British Museum Library over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The *x* axis represents the year of purchase, while the *y* axis indicates the number of items acquired. The collection started during the Keepership of Anthony Panizzi and was mostly built up in the following 35 years, continued by members of Panizzi's staff until the category of *sacre rappresentazioni* in the Library was considered complete.

Sacre rappresentazioni in the British Library (2)



In graph no. 2, the taller columns correspond respectively to the sales of Heber's library in 1836, Borluut de Noortdonck's in 1858, Guglielmo Libri's in 1859, and Henry Wellesley's in 1866. More than a century later, in 1982, the Department of Printed

[29] *Catalogue of the* [...] *Library of the Late Reverend Dr. Wellesley* [...] *Comprising* [...] *a Nearly Complete Series of 'Rapresentazioni Sacre', or Miracle Plays* [...] *Which Will be Sold by Auction, by Messrs. Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge* [...] *on Thursday, 8th November, 1866, and Fourteen Following Days* (London: J. Davy, [1866]).

Books purchased for £365 the 'last' item from Diana Parikian, an English antiquarian bookseller.[30]

The collection totals today 239 *sacre rappresentazioni* printed in the sixteenth century, 56 of these unique copies or unique known variants, which have been described and included in EDIT16, the Italian National database of all books printed in Italy between 1501 and 1600 and of books in Italian printed elsewhere, as part of the PATRIMONiT project which aims to reconstruct the history of sixteenth-century Italian popular books as they moved from Italy where they were produced to their eventual home in the British Library and to understand better when and how they arrived in the UK and why they were kept and collected despite their 'popular' and ephemeral nature.

[30] British Library, Department of Printed Books. Acquisition invoices, 15 March 1982–30 March 1982, n. 153.

A. E. Housman and Giacomo Leopardi: a chance encounter?*

Carlo Caruso

> I would very much like to know your opinion about many people, ancients or moderns, among whom I would bring to the fore: The Stoics, the Epicureans; — Villon, Pascal, Verlaine. — Leopardi; Calderon; — Ed. FitzGerald; — the German philosophers of the last century; Kant, Schopenhauer, Hartmann; — Th. Hardy; — and many others.
>
> London. 30/1/1933 Maurice Pollet.

These are the concluding words of a long questionnaire that Maurice Pollet, a French graduate of twenty-two and future Professor of English Literature, sent A. E. Housman (1859-1936), the poet and Kennedy Professor of Latin at the University of Cambridge, in January 1933. Readers familiar with Housman's dry, caustic vein would have been entitled to expect a curt, dismissive reply. In fact, Housman was not only courteous but also exceptionally thorough, the detail he provided even growing in the transition from draft to final version. Over and above the mildly ironic reason offered to Pollet ('As some of the questions which you ask in your flattering curiosity may be asked by future generations, and as many of them can only be answered by me, I make this reply'), Housman must have felt that the young age of his interlocutor deserved a concession. The result is a rare and revealing set of disclosures on Housman's life and literary preferences that has ever since constituted a valuable source for all critical contributions on his work.[1]

In the surviving draft reply, Housman singled out and commented on only a few names out of those proposed in Pollet's list.

* I am grateful to Patrick Boyde, who first directed me to the person who knows about all things Housmanian, David Butterfield, who in turn directed me to Housman's annotated copy of Leopardi's Essays and Dialogues (London: Trübner and Co., 1882) in Bryn Mawr College Library. The Library's Curator of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Marianne Hansen, kindly provided me with copies of the relevant pages from the volume. To Michael O'Neill and Stephen Regan I owe an invitation to the Centre for Poetry and Poetics, Department of English Studies, Durham University, to discuss the subject of this article, and to Kimberley Skelton many valuable suggestions that have considerably improved the text of this article. All references to the original text are from Giacomo Leopardi, Operette morali, ed. by Ottavio Besomi (Milan: Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 1979).

1 The draft and final versions of Housman's reply, together with Pollet's questionnaire, can be read in *The Letters of A. E. Housman*, ed. by Archie Burnett, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), II, pp. 325–30. See also Housman's letter to his publisher Grant Richards: 'I thought that for the sake of posterity I might as well answer some of the young man's questions' (*Letters*, II, p. 330).

> I respect the Epicureans more than the Stoics, but my man is Aristippus of Cyrene, who was not afraid of words. Of the writers you mention the only two whom I have read and admired much are Pascal and Leopardi. For Hardy I had great affection, and admiration for some of his novels and a little of his poetry.

In the letter that was actually sent to Pollet, more names are mentioned, yet — as it appears — only for the sake of creating a marked foil for the warm approval already bestowed on both Pascal and Leopardi:

> I respect the Epicureans more than the Stoics, but I am myself a Cyrenaic. Pascal and Leopardi I have studied with great admiration; Villon and Verlaine very little, Calderon and German philosophers not at all. For Hardy I felt affection, and high admiration for some of his novels and a few of his poems.[2]

These views of Housman have been known since Pollet published them in 1937, one year after Housman's death.[3] Leopardi is the author that interests us here. Pollet will have perceived patent similarities in the themes, motifs, and views of poetry and the world expressed in the work of both poets. Housman's 'haunting lyrics of disenchantment',[4] his entrenched pessimism — albeit qualified by the statement given in his reply: 'I am not a pessimist but a pejorist (as George Eliot said she was not an optimist but a meliorist') —[5] his conception of the pursuit of pleasure — with all its limitations — as the main driving force behind human aspirations, his use of natural and astral imagery highlighting the chill unresponsiveness of the cosmos to the needs of man are features that are all easily discernible, and may be said to be of absolute importance, in the poetry and thought of Leopardi as well. Leopardi's 'cosmic pessimism', according to the formula commonly used to characterize the philosophical foundations of his work, appears to be commensurate with 'Housman's sense of the power and indifference of the surrounding universe and of man's insignificance upon his turning planet.'[6] A further parallel is apparent in their excellence as classical scholars.[7]

Such points of intersection induced Ghan Singh to publish in 1962 an article entitled 'A. E. Housman and Leopardi', to date the only contribution specifically devoted to the relationship between the two poets.[8] While acknowledging Leopardi's influence both

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[2] Housman, *Letters*, II, p. 326, 329.
[3] Maurice Pollet, 'A. E. Housman: étude suivie d'une lettre inédite', *Études anglaises*, 1 (1937), pp. 385-404.
[4] Otto Skutsch, 'Alfred Edward Housman 1859–1936' (address, Centenary Celebrations in University College London [...] on 3 September 1959) (London: University of London — Athlone Press, 1960), p. 1.
[5] Housman, *Letters*, II, p. 329; also II, p. 528.
[6] Ian Scott-Kilvert, *A. E. Housman* (London: Longmans, 1955), p. 30.
[7] For general orientation see Sebastiano Timpanaro, *La filologia di Giacomo Leopardi* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1955; repr. Bari: Laterza, 1997); *A. E. Housman: Classical Scholar*, ed. by D. J. Butterfield and C. A. Stray (London: Duckworth, 2009).
[8] Ghan Singh, 'A. E. Housman and Leopardi', *English Miscellany*, 13 (1962), pp. 115–33. I am grateful to David Butterfield for directing me to Singh's article. Singh subsequently included some of his former reflections in his monograph *Leopardi and the Theory of Poetry* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1964).

as a poet and as a prose writer, Singh understandably concentrated on Leopardi's output in verse. To capture the precise nature and extent of Leopardi's influence over Housman's work, however, was and is no easy task. At the end of his article, pointedly in the last footnote, Singh offered the example of a 'verbal echo' in Housman's *To an Athlete Dying Young* (*A Shropshire Lad*, XIX, 22), where 'the fleet foot on the sill of shade' seems indeed to echo Leopardi's 'il piede | Spinto al varco leteo' from a poem on a similar subject (*A un vincitore nel pallone*, 64-65).[9] Closer scrutiny may unveil similar instances. For example, readers of Leopardi encountering Housman's first line 'Be still, my soul, be still' (*A Shropshire Lad*, XLVIII, 1) would be reminded of 'Or poserai per sempre, | stanco mio cor' (*A se stesso*, 1-2). A little further on, Housman's 'Be still, be still, my soul; it is but for a season: | Let us endure an hour and see injustice done' (11-12) would presumably recall Leopardi's 'T'acqueta omai. Dispera | L'ultima volta. Al gener nostro il fato | Non donò che il morire. Omai disprezza | Te, la natura, il brutto | Poter che, ascoso, a comun danno impera, | E l'infinita vanità del tutto' (11-16).[10] The fact that both of Housman's poems were published in his first and most famous collection, *A Shropshire Lad* (1896), must place his first contact with Leopardi around that year at the very latest, or possibly earlier, during his years of study at Oxford (1877-1881), 'when Leopardi's vogue' as Singh suggested 'was at its height' and Oxford — in the words Tom Stoppard lent to the older Housman in *The Invention of Love* — 'was still the sweet city of dreaming spires.'[11] Yet the intrinsic nature of each poet's verse remains very distinct, and Singh rightly cautioned that it would be 'safer to speak of affinity than of influence'.[12] Such affinity must have been felt by any discerning reader who happened to know both authors well, as the following episode shows. In 1923, well before Pollet or Singh suggested any comparison between the two poets, Geoffrey L. Bickersteth published a bilingual edition of Leopardi's poems with an excellent introduction and an extensive commentary. On annotating a passage in Leopardi's 'Il tramonto della luna' where the 'confused traveller' is shown searching for some reason or goal for his earthly journey and ending on a note of desolate estrangement ('e vede | Che a sé l'umana sede, | Esso a lei è fatto estrano'), Bickersteth referred to Housman's *Last Poems* which had appeared the year before (1922): 'I, a

[9] Singh, 'A. E. Housman and Leopardi', p. 133, note 43.
[10] Simone Albonico, 'Leopardi, "A se stesso" ', in *Filologia e storia letteraria: studi per Roberto Tissoni* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2008), pp. 446–54, stresses the poem's affinity with Catullus 8 ('Miser Catulle, desinas ineptire'), which in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century editions was ordinarily assigned the title *Ad seipsum*. However, Catullus 8 does not seem to have been on Housman's mind when he wrote 'Be still, my soul': see *The Poems of A. E. Housman*, ed. by Archie Burnett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 357–58.
[11] Singh, 'A. E. Housman and Leopardi', p. 115; Tom Stoppard, *The Invention of Love* [1997] (London: Faber and Faber, 2013), p. 32.
[12] Singh, 'A. E. Housman and Leopardi', p. 115.

stranger and afraid | In a world I never made' (*Last Poems*, XII, 17-18).[13] To my knowledge, this observation is the first that brought the two poets together.

Housman was twenty-one, thus intellectually turning of age, when in 1881 Matthew Arnold's preface to an edition of Byron's works proved a decisive moment for Leopardi's reputation in England.[14] Arnold's unqualified admiration for the Italian poet helped move Victorian readership away from the moralistic view that had stifled all previous appreciation of Leopardi's poetry and thought; the case of Gladstone, profoundly stirred by Leopardi's poetry yet at the same time horrified by its underpinning philosophy, is exemplary in that respect.[15] What is perhaps interesting, and in part unexpected, is that Housman's interest in Leopardi should be stimulated by not only his verse but his prose work as well, and more specifically his *Operette morali* (first published 1827). One year after Arnold's famous statement, a translation of Leopardi's prose masterpiece appeared in print under the title *Essays and Dialogues of Giacomo Leopardi* (1882), a copy of which Housman owned and annotated, albeit very sparingly. In 2005, P. G. Naiditch signalled the presence of Housman's copy among the holdings of Bryn Mawr College Library.[16]

Inside the front cover the volume has the bookplate '*from the Library of* | A. E. HOUSMAN', characteristic of the items that had been either bequeathed by Housman to his friends and acquaintances or sold when the remainder of his personal library was dispersed after his death. As already mentioned, Housman made few annotations; in fact, to use the words of the librarian of Bryn Mawr College, '"annotated" is a rather overstated description of the volume', for in the vast majority of cases Housman confined himself to tracing a single line along the edge of the passage which had raised his interest.[17]

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[13] *The Poems of Leopardi*, ed. with introduction and notes and a verse-translation in the metres of the original by Geoffrey L. Bickersteth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923), p. 482. A paperback reprint was published in 2013, presumably to mark and complement the publication of the first complete English translation of the *Zibaldone*: Giacomo Leopardi, *Zibaldone: the Notebooks of Leopardi*, ed. by Michael Caesar and Franco D'Intino (London: Penguin, 2013).

[14] *Poetry of Byron*, chosen and arranged by Matthew Arnold (London: Macmillan, 1881), pp. xiv, xxi–xxiv. Cf. Ottavio M. Casale and Allan C. Dooley, 'Leopardi, Arnold, and the Victorian Sensibility', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 17 (1980), pp. 44–65, who point (p. 60) to Sainte-Beuve's famous article on Leopardi, published in the *Revue des deux mondes* (1844) and reprinted in *Portraits contemporains* (1847), as one of Arnold's main sources of inspiration.

[15] Cf., for example, Gladstone's reaction to Leopardi's *A se stesso* as reported in Casale and Dooley, 'Leopardi, Arnold, and the Victorian Sensibility', p. 53. On the reception of Leopardi in the early Victorian age see also Beatrice Corrigan, 'The Poetry of Leopardi in Victorian England, 1837–1878', *English Miscellany*, 14 (1963), pp. 171–84; Carlo Dionisotti, 'Fortuna di Leopardi', in *Appunti sui moderni: Foscolo, Leopardi, Manzoni e altri* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1988), pp. 211–27, formerly in *Essays in Honour of John Humphreys Whitfield*, ed. by H. C. David, D. G. Ree, J. M. Hatwell, and G. W. Slowey (London: St George's Press, 1975), pp. 222–35.

[16] P. G. Naiditch, 'The Extant Portion of the Library of A. E. Housman. IV. Non-Classical Materials', *Housman Society Journal*, 31 (2005), pp. 154–180 (p. 177).

[17] Communication of Marianne Hansen, Bryn Mawr College Library, 17 September 2013.

Leopardi's *Essays and Dialogues*, translated by Charles Edwardes, is the seventeenth volume in the publisher's series entitled The English and Foreign Philosophical Library. The publicity pages at the end of the volume list Quinet and Feuerbach among the series' authors, while announced as forthcoming are Leopardi's *Prose Works* translated by the same Edwardes (which does not seem to have been published), Hartmann's *Philosophy of the Unconscious* (publ. 1884) and Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* (publ. 1883–1886). Pollet could not have divined better company for Housman's Leopardi. Even though Housman had presumably been genuine in declaring his lack of familiarity with the German philosophers, Pollet had had every right to mention Leopardi alongside Hartmann and Schopenhauer — and could have legitimately added Nietzsche as well.[18]

Charles Edwardes, the translator and editor of Leopardi's *Essays and Dialogues*, is one of those well-deserving authors to whom nineteenth-century British readers owed a less stereotyped image of Italy and its least well-known regions. His *Sardinia and the Sardes* (1889) features deservedly, although not equally prominently, along with such classic travel books as George Gissing's *By the Ionian Sea* (1901), D. H. Lawrence's *Sea and Sardinia* (1921) and the undisputed masterpiece of the genre, Norman Douglas's *Old Calabria* (1915).[19] The Leopardi volume reveals him as an overall able translator and a perceptive reader, and his opening 'Biographical Sketch' rests upon extensive knowledge of the poet's previously published work and correspondence. This enabled him to provide an up-to-date portrait of a literary figure who was then coming out of the shadows for most Anglophone readers. Edwardes shared Arnold's view of Leopardi as a prominent philosopher as well as a great poet. In his introduction, he cited with due emphasis Leopardi's letter of 24 May 1832 to the Swiss scholar Louis de Sinner where the poet disapprovingly 'anticipated that posterity [...] would endeavour to explain the pessimism of his philosophy by his personal misfortunes and sufferings.' Edwardes also fervently called his readers' attention to Leopardi's achievement as a superb, aristocratically crystalline prose writer.[20]

To come now to the few sparse marks expressing Housman's appreciation of Leopardi's *Essays and Dialogues*, the only passages bearing explicit comments in the margins are only two and of merely trifling interest. In the 'Dialogue of Columbus and

[18] One may wonder whether the presence of Thomas Hardy in Pollet's list, although amply justified in its own right, was also partly inspired by a wider web of associations. In Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Chapter 25, Schopenhauer and Leopardi are mentioned together as representatives of that 'ruminative philosophy' which in the novel characterizes the mentality of Angel Clare's father (Casale and Dooley, 'Leopardi, Arnold, and the Victorian Sensibility', p. 65, note 18).

[19] Edwardes's other works include various translations, novels, stories and travel writings, all published in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. His only other book on an Italian subject is the translation of Marie Espérance von Schwartz's memoir on Garibaldi: Elpis Melena [pseud. of M. E. von Schwartz], *Garibaldi: Recollections of His Public and Private Life* (London: Trübner & Co., 1887).

[20] *Essays and Dialogues*, pp. xxvii–xxviii, xxxiv.

Gutierrez' (p. 141) the translator had not recognised in Leopardi's 'Annone' the Italian vernacular form for the famous Carthaginian explorer Hanno (produced, as is customary with Italian versions of Classical names, by dropping the initial aspirated letter and constructing the noun on the form of the accusative case). Housman underlined 'Annonus' and wrote in the margin 'Hanno'.[21] In the 'Panegyric of Birds' a few pages later (p. 150), he underlined the words 'just as' and 'so' and added an exclamation mark in the margin — undoubtedly noting the long comparison that stretches for seven lines of text.[22]

The truly interesting instances are represented by those lines drawn along the external margin of the text — of the type, one might say, university students are likely to trace on university libraries' volumes and library employees conscientiously erase at the end of each academic year. And yet, such is the mute eloquence of Housman's markings in dialogue with Leopardi's text that their survival is worth recording. In other words, the highlighted passages speak for themselves. This is why I offer a transcription of them in the Appendix, while adding a few words here about their significance.

Those passages confirm interest in themes on which Housman, as intensely as Leopardi, reflected for his entire life. Admittedly, the nature of the testimony is desultory and one can only assume that Housman's marks are meant to express approval and similarity of views, perhaps even agreement on a more intimate level. Almost all of the lines drawn along the edge of the text fall within two *operette*, 'Remarkable Sayings of Philip Ottonieri' and 'Dialogue between Timandro and Eleandro'. Housman the epigrammatist (epigrammatic wit he used in his scholarly polemics both profusely and ruthlessly) would inevitably be attracted to Filippo Ottonieri's crisp sayings — hence his attention being drawn by a witty distinction between truth and beauty (Appendix No 5), or by the intriguing paradox that the human race should thank 'the custom of buying and selling human beings' for the acceptance and dissemination of the smallpox vaccine (no. 6). But in one case, when Leopardi's prose gains greater depth and develops into one of his typically searching and merciless, yet strangely sympathetic, inquiries into the human condition with its diverse and not always respectable motivations and ambitions (no. 4), Housman's marking of the long passage begs the question of to what extent he may have recognised parts of himself in it — perhaps 'his craving to be liked and his craving to be famous', as has been written of him on the basis of his own statements, and the way in which 'he concealed the one for fear that it might not meet the perfect response, and how the attempt to hide the other made him reject all the honours that were offered to him'.[23] As for the 'Dialogue between Timandro and Eleandro', it seems

[21] 'Dialogo di Cristoforo Colombo e di Pietro Gutierrez', ed. Besomi, § 10.
[22] Translation of the original 'siccome [...] similmente [...]' ('Elogio degli uccelli', ed. Besomi, § 31).
[23] Skutsch, 'Alfred Edward Housman 1859-1936', p. 14.

natural to watch Housman taking sides with Eleandro (Appendix nos 8–14), namely with the character who feels pity for the human race (as etymology dictates: *eleos* 'pity' + *anēr* 'man'), rather than with its estimator (*timaō* 'respect' + *anēr* 'man').

The passage which illustrates better than any other Leopardi's idea of poetry in the making, however, is not from the *Operette morali* but from a letter to Leopardi's friend Giuseppe Melchiorri. Edwardes reported the relevant passage in his introduction, and Housman marked it out in his usual fashion:

> I compose only when under an inspiration, yielding to which, in two minutes, I have designed and organised the poem. This done, I wait for a recurrence of such inspiration, which seldom happens until several weeks have elapsed. Then I set to work at composition, but so slowly that I cannot complete a poem, however short, in less than two or three weeks. Such is my method; without inspiration it were easier to draw water from a stone than a single verse from my brain.[24]

Unaware of the existence of Housman's annotated copy, Singh had quoted this very passage in connection with two of Housman's pronouncements on poetry in the making. The first is the statement, ascribed to Housman, that 'poetry is either easy or impossible'; the second is the point on which he elaborated in the final pages of his Cambridge lecture *The Name and Nature of Poetry* in 1933.[25] Those pages are very well known, so that only parts of them are transcribed below. It is easy, however, to note a concurrence of thought and language in both authors' texts, and the way in which they both stress the laborious activity that stands in direct opposition to the spontaneous flow of poetic imagery and verse.

> In short I think that the production of poetry, in its first stage, is less an active than a passive and involuntary process; and if I were obliged, not to define poetry, but to name the class of things to which it belongs, I should call it a secretion; whether a natural secretion, like turpentine in the fir, or a morbid secretion, like the pearl in the oyster. [...] Having drunk a pint of beer at luncheon — beer is a sedative to the brain, and my afternoons are the least intellectual portion of my life — I would go out for a walk of two or three hours. As I went along, thinking of nothing in particular, only looking at things around me and following the progress of the seasons, there would flow into my mind, with sudden and unaccountable emotion, sometimes a line or two of verse, sometimes a whole stanza at once, accompanied, not preceded, by a vague notion of the poem which they were destined to form part of. [...] When I got home I wrote them down, leaving gaps, and hoping that further inspiration might be forthcoming another day. Sometimes it was [...]; but sometimes the poem had to be taken in hand and completed by the brain [...]. I happen to remember distinctly the genesis of the piece which stands last in my first volume [*A Shropshire Lad*, LXIII 'I hoed and trenched and weeded']. Two of the stanzas, I do not say which, came into my head, just as they are printed, while I was crossing the corner of Hampstead Heath

[24] *Essays and Dialogues*, p. xxxiii. The original can be read in Giacomo Leopardi, *Epistolario*, ed. by Franco Brioschi and Patrizia Landi, 2 vols (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1998), I, pp. 792–93 (5 March 1824).
[25] Singh, 'A. E. Housman and Leopardi', pp. 118–19.

> between the Spaniard's Inn and the footpath to Temple Fortune. A third stanza came with a little coaxing after tea. One more was needed, but it did not come: I had to turn to and compose it myself, and that was a laborious business. I wrote it thirteen times, and it was more than a twelvemonth before I got it right.[26]

Would it be too adventurous to suggest that a pale and perhaps unconscious memory of Leopardi's letter had somehow worked its way into this most famous piece of Housman's (self-)critical prose? No doubt Maurice Pollet and Ghan Singh would have been delighted to learn that the quotation from Leopardi's letter is the very first passage Housman emphasised in his copy. Irrespective of whether the encounter between the two poets was the product of mere chance or of design, the retrieval of Housman's copy of Leopardi's *Essays and Dialogues* confirms it was a felicitous and fruitful one.

Appendix

Essays and Dialogues of Giacomo Leopardi. Trans. by Charles Edwardes. With Biographical Sketch (London: Trübner & Co. 1882). Bryn Mawr College Library, shelfmark PR4809.H15 Z997246 1882.

> The portions of text transcribed below correspond to those marked by Housman. When a slightly enlarged context is needed, this is given within square brackets. A more wide-ranging comparison can be easily achieved by accessing Edwardes's edition on www.archive.org.[27]

Quoted in Edwardes's 'Biographical Sketch', p. xxxiii.

> 1. I compose only when under an inspiration, yielding to which, in two minutes, I have designed and organised the poem. This done, I wait for a recurrence of such inspiration, which seldom happens until several weeks have elapsed. Then I set to work at composition, but so slowly that I cannot complete a poem, however short, in less than two or three weeks. Such is my method; without inspiration it were easier to draw water from a stone than a single verse from my brain. [Leopardi to Giuseppe Melchiorri, 5 March 1824; original in Giacomo Leopardi, *Epistolario*, ed. by Franco Brioschi and Patrizia Landi, 2 vols (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1998), I, pp. 792–93].

Edwardes's 'Biographical Sketch', p. xxxviii.

[26] A. E. Housman, *The Name and Nature of Poetry*. The Leslie Stephen Lecture delivered at Cambridge, 9 May 1933 (Cambridge: Readers' Union and Cambridge University Press, 1939), pp. 48–50.
[27] <https://archive.org/details/essaysanddialogooleopgoog> [accessed 28 January 2017].

2. As [Samuel] Johnson has said: "The cure for the greatest part of human miseries is not radical but palliative." [*The Rambler*, no 32, Saturday, July 7, 1750.]

'Dialogue between Nature and an Icelander', p. 79 (ed. Besomi, § 26).

3. [*Icelander*] For whose pleasure and service is this wretched life of the world maintained, by the suffering and death of all the beings which compose it?

'Remarkable Sayings of Philip Ottonieri', Chapter 4, pp. [128]–30 (ed. Besomi, 4, §§ 8–13).

4. [He divided the men of civilised nations into three classes. [...] The third class, incomparably the smallest in numbers, and often even more despised than the second,[28] consists of those men in whom nature is strong enough to resist and often repulse the civilising influence of the times. They are seldom apt in business, or self-governed in society; nor do they shine in conversation, nor succeed in making themselves agreeable to their fellow-men. This class is | subdivided into two varieties.] The one includes those strong and courageous natures that despise the contempt they excite, and often indeed esteem it more than honour. They differ from other men, not only by nature, but also by choice and preference. Having nothing in common with the hopes and pleasures of society, solitary in a crowd, they avoid other men as much as they themselves are avoided. Specimens of this class are rarely met with. The other variety consists of persons whose nature is a compound of strength, weakness, and timidity, and who are therefore in a constant state of agitation. They are as a rule desirous of associating with their fellows, and wishing to emulate the men of the cultivated class, they feel acutely the contempt in which they are held by their inferiors. These men are never successful in life; they fail in ever becoming practical, and in society are neither tolerable to themselves nor others. Not a few of our most gifted men of modern times have belonged to this division in more or less degree. J. J. Rousseau is a famous example, and with him may be bracketed one of the ancients, Virgil. Of the latter it is said, on the authority of Melissus, that he was very slow of speech, and apparently a most ordinary endowed man. And this, together with the probability that owing to his great talents Virgil was little at ease in society, seems likely enough, both from the laboured subtlety of his style, and the nature of his poetry; it is also confirmed by what we read towards the end of the Second Book of the Georgics [II, 458–542]. There the poet expresses a wish for a quiet and solitary life, as though he regarded it as a remedy and refuge more than an advantage in itself. Now, seeing that with rare exceptions men of these two species are never esteemed until they are dead, and are of little power in the world; he asserted as a general rule, that the only way to gain esteem during life is to live unnaturally. And since the first class, which is the mean of the two extremes, represents the civilisation | of our times; he concluded from

[28] 'The second class are they who preserve their primitive nature in a greater degree, either from lack of culture or because they are naturally incapable of being influenced by the arts, manners, and customs of others. This is the most numerous of the three classes, and is held in general contempt' (*Essays and Dialogues*, p. 128).

this and other circumstances that the conduct of human affairs is entirely in the hands of mediocrity.

'Remarkable Sayings of Philip Ottonieri', chapter 5, pp. 133 (ed. Besomi, 5, §§ 11, 14).

5. The true is not necessarily the beautiful. Yet, though beauty be preferable to truth, where the former is wanting, the latter is the next best thing.
6. He said that the custom of buying and selling human beings has proved useful to the race. In confirmation of this, he mentioned the practice of inoculating for small-pox, which originated in Circassia; from Constantinople it passed to England, and thence became disseminated throughout Europe. Its office was to mitigate the destructiveness wrought by true small-pox, which besides endangering the life and comeliness of the Circassian children and youths, was especially disastrous in its effects on the sale of their maidens.

'Remarkable Sayings of Philip Ottonieri', Chapter 6, p. 134 (ed. Besomi, 6, § 4).

7. He greatly praised the following saying of Bion Borysthenes, mentioned by Laertius: "They who seek the greatest happiness, suffer most." [Diog. Laert. 4, 48.]

'Dialogue between Timandro and Eleandro', p. 157 (ed. Besomi, §§ 6–7).

Tim. You must, however, like all men, endeavour to serve your race.
Elean. If my race, on the contrary, does its best to injure me, I do not see that this obligation holds, as you say.

'Dialogue between Timandro and Eleandro', p. 159 (ed. Besomi, § 12).

8. [*Elean.*] I must confess, however, that recognising clearly, as I do, how ignorant I am of the simplest means of making myself agreeable to others, both in conversation and the daily intercourse of life, whether from a natural defect or fault of my own, I should esteem men less if they treated me better. [*Elean.*] Indeed, the fact that hatred is so completely foreign to me, goes far to explain my inability to do as other men do.

'Dialogue between Timandro and Eleandro', p. 160 (ed. Besomi, § 16).

9. [*Elean.*] Consequently, my mind loses what irritation it previously felt. I reverse my wrath for occasions when I might see some wickedness of which my nature is incapable; but so far I have never met with such a case.
10. [*Elean.*] Hatred and anger seem to me great and strong passions, out of harmony with the insignificance of life.

'Dialogue between Timandro and Eleandro', pp. [162]–63 (ed. Besomi, §§ 27, 28).

11. [*Elean.*] [My despair is absolute, unchangeable, and so based on firm judgment | and conviction,] that I cannot imagine such a thing as a joyous future, nor can I undertake anything with the hope of bringing it to completion.
12. [*Elean.*] My judgment is of myself alone, and I am quite sure I do not err in announcing my unhappiness. If other men are happy, I congratulate them with all my heart.

Ippolito Nievo — La Pisana, perfetta anti-eroina

Elisabetta Rasy

Una delle non molte figure femminili di rilievo della narrativa romanzesca italiana dell'Ottocento è la Pisana delle *Confessioni di un italiano* di Ippolito Nievo. Anzi, lo vorrei dire in un modo più esplicito: nel territorio del romanzo italiano dell'Ottocento ci sono solo due figure femminili che spiccano, indimenticabili entrambe e antagoniste: la Pisana e la Lucia manzoniana. Lucia, se non altro per via scolastica, è entrata nel canone pedagogico degli italiani e delle italiane, Pisana invece è l'eccezione che forse conferma la regola o forse l'eccezione che smaschera la regola. Ma Pisana (con o senza l'articolo che precede all'uso settentrionale il nome) non è solo un ritratto in presa diretta o, all'opposto, una figura idealizzata dell'anticonformismo e della ribellione femminile. Pisana nasce dalla complessità del romanzo di Nievo, e direi che nasce dalla sua multiforme e variegata partitura linguistica. Poichè per parlare delle *Confessioni d'un italiano* di Nievo, al di là del valore dei suoi espliciti contenuti storici, non si può che cominciare dalla lingua.

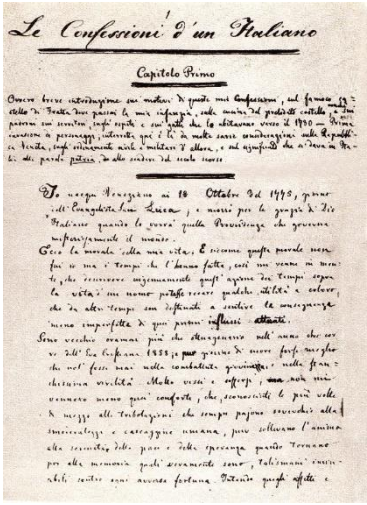
Ma per parlare della lingua di Nievo bisogna fare un passo indietro, cioè parlare di Nievo stesso. Non credo infatti che, come si suggeriva un tempo, si possa parlare di un testo prescindendo dal suo autore. E' vero che un testo letterario è un corpo a sè, con arti, muscoli, vertebre e costole e una sua postura e fisionomia, ma è necessario, per non trasformarsi in medici legali della letteratura, retrocedere al soggetto, o meglio alla soggettività che l'ha scritto, quell'io certamente dalle identità multiple ma di fatto riunite in una stessa persona e sotto uno stesso nome. Ippolito Nievo di identità multiple ne aveva parecchie: il ragazzo veneto-friulano di una famiglia della buona società locale, il figlio dal forte legame con la madre più che con il padre, il nipote particolarmente legato al vecchio nonno Carlo Marin signore del castello di Colloredo, di cui ascoltava tutte le storie, il ragazzo dalla testa calda che partecipa giovanissimo ai moti di Mantova e poi di Toscana, l'appassionato lettore con una vasta conoscenza della cultura letteraria europea del tempo oltre che di quella italiana, il traduttore che aveva fatto conoscere i poemi di Heine, il letterato che si occupava del mondo contadino e che fu al centro di una causa intentatagli dalla polizia austriaca per vilipendio delle forze dell'ordine, il protagonista di storie d'amore appassionate e infelici, infine il patriota, il garibaldino, il politico autore di scritti sulla situazione italiana. Però, detto tutto ciò, se dovessi definire con una sola espressione Nievo direi che era un vero democratico. Laico e democratico.

A differenza di altre figure del Risorgimento italiano Nievo aveva un orecchio speciale per una questione con cui il processo dell' unità d'Italia faticava a fare i conti,

cioè la grave e vasta questione sociale che l'Italia poneva, le masse escluse non solo dal processo politico in corso ma da un processo di emancipazione umana o semplicemente di lotta. Se Engels a Manchester in quegli stessi anni di metà Ottocento si occupava degli operai, Nievo invece nel suo Veneto, nel suo Friuli, osservava i contadini che erano soggetti a una classe dominante ancora non dissimile da quella feudale, che ereditava con le terre e i castelli, come dice nelle *Confessioni*, molti diritti e quasi nessun dovere. Nievo — e nel suo libro, che è anche e molto, seppure non solo, un romanzo di idee , tutto questo si trova — credeva nell'educazione delle masse popolari, e credeva che tale educazione fosse possibile solo a un certo livello di vita garantita; ma soprattutto, a differenza di altri scrittori a lui contemporanei che per fare l'Italia si rivolgevano al passato o a foschi drammi romantici o alla più schematica ideologia, lui cercava di decrittare una società italiana del tempo che non era tanto facile mettere a fuoco, una società multipla e contraddittoria, diversa dalle borghesie di altri stati europei, già abbastanza formate e consolidate. E lo faceva senza quei radicalismi ideologici che ottundono il senso della realtà, e con un'attenzione anche alle insidie del cambiamento (in una lettera scrive del paradosso del 'nostro secolo che ingigantisce nei campi dell'intelligenza, e s'impiccolisce nell'ordine morale'), tanto che a un certo punto fa dire al probo Bruto Provedoni: 'La rivoluzione — stiamo cioè parlando dell'arrivo dei francesi in Veneto — per ora ci fa più male che bene. Ho gran paura che avremo di qui a qualche anno superbamente insediata un'aristocrazia del denaro, che farà desiderare quella della nascita.' Tanto è forte e moderna e vigile la sua vocazione democratica che persino gli animali occupano la sua attenzione, in una sorta di animalismo ante-litteram di cui è esempio il bellissimo episodio del gattone soriano che non si rassegna alla morte dell'amico Marocco, re dei gatti del Castello di Fratta.

Tutto questo per dire che nella sua fluviale opera quello che Nievo ci propone non è semplicemente un gioco lessicale e stilistico, ma una vera e propria democrazia linguistica. E come tutte le democrazie è piena, fortunatamente, di confusione, di contraddizioni, di contrasti, di voli e di cadute.

Molti hanno studiato l'irregolarità e le stratificazioni della lingua delle *Confessioni*, ma basta leggere qualche pagina per capire che Nievo, anche dal punto di vista linguistico, è l'anti-Manzoni: tanto Manzoni risciacquava, per usare la celebre formuletta scolastica, i panni in Arno, tanto Nievo li sporcava, potremmo dire, in tutti i rigagnoli della lingua parlata, in tutti i rigagnoli e in tutta l'acqua non proprio pulita che scorreva nella cucina di Fratta: cucina che, esemplarmente, è il luogo basso, terreno, quasi ctonio dove non casualmente inizia il suo romanzo. Quella affascinantissima cucina spande la sua ombra lunga, popolosa e popolare sulla costruzione delle successive numerose pagine della storia. Senza, però, che Nievo si privi poi dell'esibizione della lingua aulica — specie nell'ultima parte dell'opera che, almeno ai miei occhi, è la più didascalica, la più affrettata, forse per la semplice ansia


Le Confessioni d'un Italiano

Capitolo Primo

Prima pagina autografa delle *Confessioni d'un Italiano*

di concludere e di dire tutto quello che ancora c'è da dire, che sicuramente lo assalì alla fine di un romanzo totalizzante come le *Confessioni* sono e volevano essere.

Se Manzoni stabilisce una sorta di canone linguistico, Nievo è assolutamente 'anomalistico' come dice Mengaldo, anomico, avverso alle regole della bella prosa, ma anche alle regole della costruzione romanzesca. E' stato detto, e qui lo riassumo brevemente, che le *Confessioni* è sia un romanzo storico che un romanzo di formazione che un romanzo che si ispira alla forma dei *memoir* e alla tradizione autobiografica settecentesca. E che nella sua lingua composita c'è di tutto: i dialettismi lombardi, toscani e soprattutto veneto-friulani (cito una frase del parzialmente friulano Pasolini che definisce la lingua delle *Confessioni*: 'idealmente grondante dei dialettismi della Bassa friulana incivilita ai margini di Venezia'). Ma c'è nei dialoghi anche molto Goldoni, amato tantissimo da Nievo, e perché no Lorenzo Da Ponte, con i suoi magistrali dialoghi per Mozart (e Da Ponte fa anche parte della tradizione autobiografica veneta con Gozzi e Casanova, che lo scrittore non doveva ignorare), c'è insomma la chiacchiera, la speciale chiacchiera veneta. Su questa chiacchiera c'è una bella frase di Giovanni Comisso molto pertinente all'opera di Nievo: 'Chiacchiera che, raffinata nelle relazioni degli ambasciatori davanti al Senato, al ritorno delle loro ambascerie, o nelle conversazioni nei salotti patrizi del Settecento, si tramutò, nel secolo scorso — cioè nell'Ottocento — seguendo la moda del romanzo europeo, in narrativa romanzesca.' Infine, Nievo scriveva molte lettere, alla madre, alle donne amate, agli amici: e nelle *Confessioni* si ritrova molto di questo lessico familiare, di questo lessico dell' intimità e della confidenza, e certo se ne ritrova il tono. E vorrei aggiungere che, anche per questo oltre che per la sua indole laica, progressista e liberale (nel senso americano del termine), a differenza di molti scrittori italiani coevi — Manzoni prima di tutti — e di buona parte dei successivi, Nievo non aveva l'ossessione dello stile, di qualificarsi attraverso lo stile. Nella sua democrazia linguistica sono, come si vede anche dalla folla di personaggi di diverso ceto ed estrazione e ambiente, molte le voci che entrano in scena, così che lo lo stile ha un'identità mobile e polifonica.

Uno dei punti di forza della polifonia delle *Confessioni d'un italiano* di Ippolito Nievo, di quella che ho chiamato la democrazia linguistica dello scrittore, è proprio la figura di Pisana, la cugina odiata e amata ma più che altro amata, che è l'antagonista

di Carlino Altoviti, e la protagonista femminile — mi verrebbe da dire la vera protagonista — del romanzo. Non per caso la trascrizione televisiva dell'opera, quando la beata Rai degli anni Sessanta sfornava dei ben confezionati sceneggiati ispirati a grandi romanzi e a grandi vicende storiche con ottimi attori teatrali, fu intitolata *La Pisana* (l'interprete era Lydia Alfonsi e Carlino Giulio Bosetti). Tutti gli studiosi delle *Confessioni* hanno messo in rilievo l'importanza e l'originalità di questa figura, e se Nievo, in virtù della sua lingua 'mescidata' e dell'architettura anomala e irregolare del suo libro che è un intreccio di tanti differenti generi (romanzo storico, romanzo di formazione, *memoir*, autobiografia), può essere descritto, grazie al suo laicismo democratico, con un po' di approssimazione come un anti-Manzoni, non c'è dubbio invece che Pisana sia proprio una anti-Lucia. Però, dopo averne sottolineato e ammirato il fascino e l'irregolarità, quasi tutti gli esegeti dell'opera di Nievo hanno lasciato la bella bruna che perde e salva la vita di Carlino Altoviti al suo stravagante destino. Perché Pisana, proprio come sempre fugge la presa del suo spasimante, effettivamente sfugge alle classificazioni.

Il narratore-amante dice di lei tutto e il contrario di tutto: fin da ragazzina (i due crescono insieme nel castello di Fratta, lui è il parente povero e lei la cugina contessina ricca, come a stabilire subito una distanza simbolica che notoriamente favorisce l'ardore amoroso), fin da ragazzina, dunque, lei è 'girevole', 'arrogante', 'lusinghiera', incapace di 'discernere in se stessa il vero dall'immaginato', la sua indole è 'impetuosa, varia, irrequieta' ma è anche 'generosa' e di 'rara intelligenza' però precocemente sensuale, poi si comporta come un maschio quando si precipita a 'ruzzolar nel fieno' ma, di nuovo, è anche una 'fanciulletta troppo svegliata' e dedita fin dai primi anni di vita agli 'amoretti, le gelosie, le nozze, i divorzi, i rappaciamenti' con i giovani maschi che ruotano intorno al castello di Fratta. E così per tutti i lunghi anni raccontati, la fisionomia di Pisana è costantemente mobile nel racconto di Nievo. La ragazza e poi la donna continua a essere 'umile e superba, buona e crudele.' Fino a quando nella maturità di Carlino, dopo averlo già salvato molte volte, a Londra, dove lo ha seguito nell'esilio, non esita a farsi mendicante per mantenerlo e curarlo, e morire poi santamente di consunzione.

Ma fino a qui, fino a questo quadro, in realtà si può dire che Pisana anticipi — certo di un bel po' — l'icona della *femme fatale*, che avrebbe occupato l'immaginario degli scrittori di fine secolo. A me sembra che la vera originalità di Pisana stia altrove, non solo nel fatto — di sicuro abbastanza rilevante — che non sia casta e che abbia anzi una certa disponibilità al libero amore. La vera originalità ce la indica lo stesso narratore quando, all'ennesimo spasimo della sua tormentatissima passione e soprattutto di fronte all'ennesima fuga della ragazza, ne elenca i difetti ('l'incendio dei sensi'), ma anche le virtù. Che sono: il coraggio, la pietà, la generosità, l'immaginazione. Virtù

Ippolito Nievo in divisa da Garibaldino

laiche, del tutto insolite in un'eroina dell'Ottocento italiano. E infatti, se com'è stato detto Carlo Altoviti è un classico anti-eroe, uno dei tanti della migliore letteratura italiana, eroico per caso e perplesso per vocazione, Pisana — cosa decisamente più insolita — è un'anti-eroina: non si sposa, non fa figli, è un po' maschio e un po' femmina, non è mai dove dovrebbe essere e come dovrebbe essere.

Ama la libertà ma non è ideologica, non accetta fedi o convenzioni, e pensa con la sua testa. Sbaglia spesso, paga spesso, ma continua a pensare con la sua testa. Molto più del suo protagonista maschile, è Pisana la vera figura del laicismo di Nievo.

Se la sua caratteristica è quella di essere sempre in fuga — dal narratore che la desidera, dal castello di Fratta, dalla casa veneziana della madre, dalla casa coniugale, vagabonda in giro per l'Italia e poi in Inghilterra — è anche sempre in fuga dal discorso narrativo che vorrebbe ma non può intrappolarla, cioè raccontarla. Le descrizioni che Nievo per l'interposta persona della sua voce narrante fa di Pisana sono innumerevoli: la descrive e la ridescrive come se mai riuscisse a disegnarla davvero. Pisana scappa dalla vita dell'amante ma anche dall'immaginario dell'autore: che l'acchiappa per frammenti, per lampi, perché un'eroina così non si è mai vista, e un'anti-eroe al femminile è difficile da maneggiare. Si capisce bene quando Pisana parla. Per la chiacchiera femminile Nievo ha un orecchio acuto. All'inizio del decimo capitolo scrive che c'è una 'donnesca magia' che fa 'noi uomini esser doppiamente vivi, doppiamente lesti e giocondi quando ci troviamo insieme a donne.' E continua ancora più esplicitamente: 'Fuori dai colloqui obbligati a un prefisso argomento, quello che si chiama proprio il vero spontaneo brioso chiacchierio non ho mai potuto farmelo venire in bocca trattenendomi con uomini [...] Ma se fosse venuta a mettercisi di mezzo una donna! Subito si aprivano le rosee porte della fantasia e gli usci segreti dei sentimenti [...].'

La donnesca magia nelle parole di Pisana si risolve in una spregiudicatezza verbale che non si piega mai alla retorica femminile. 'Ho piantato mio marito, sono stanca di

mia madre, fui respinta dai miei parenti. Vengo a stare con te.' Con insolite punte di speranza emancipatoria: 'Sono giovane e posso lavorare [...]', risponde a Carlo che le fa notare che non ha niente per vivere visto che il marito per punirla non le passa che una miseria. E, ancora più spregiudicatamente, aggiunge: '[...] e poi io starò con te, e il mantenimento me lo conterai per salario.' Persino in punto di morte cerca di resistere con l'ironia alla retorica con cui l'amante vuole investirla: 'Sono una Corinna molto pallida, una Saffo assai magra! [...]. Mi sembra quasi d'esser diventata inglese, che somiglio a una cavalletta! Ma ho guadagnato in idea aristocratica.'

Con la morte della Pisana, che attraversa tutta la narrazione come una vibrazione sonora, il romanzo, almeno ai miei occhi, perde mordente: come se, senza i discorsi concreti e privi di derive consolatorie, senza il laico e ironico sguardo critico della sua anti-eroina, Nievo si lasciasse andare alla morigerata, edificante morale della sua epoca. E infine, non essendoci più di mezzo una donna — quella donna così irregolare — lo 'spontaneo brioso chiacchierio' del suo romanzo lentamente venisse meno.

I. Additions to the sixteenth-century bibliography of Verona
II. A Bergamo edition of Catullus, 1516?

Dennis E. Rhodes

I

In the years 1992 and 1994 respectively were published two volumes of annals on the bibliography of Verona during the sixteenth century.[1] This is a magnificent piece of work, probably unique for its comprehensive covering of the printing history of any city in Italy. As a personal friend of the two compilers, I had the honour of being invited to contribute a foreword. In this I wrote that no fewer than 763 Veronese editions of that century alone had been traced and described, thanks to the incredible energy of the compilers in sending enquiries to almost all the major libraries of the world, plus, no doubt, a number of private collectors.

It is therefore surprising that in the notes which follow I have been able to add four more titles: not so surprising however that the compilers missed them, in view of the most unexpected sources from which they come. Furthermore each piece seems to be unique. Most modern booksellers' catalogues are undated and undatable with any degree of accuracy, but about the year 2000 I received copies of the following:

1. Hesketh & Ward, London, *Continental books, catalogue no. 21.*
2. A cyclostyled list of 71 items on sale by Bernard Shapero Rare Books, 80, Holland Park Avenue, London, W11 3RE. This gives no notes on the early provenance of the books on offer.

In the Shapero list, no. 50 reads:

> Mantovano Stefano. La Gloriosa et felice Vittoria conseguita dall'armata Christiana contra quella del Turcho. Dove si raconta la Causa della Guerra & l'Effetto di essa con la Rotta dell'Armata Turchesca posta in ottava Rima. Bastian dalle Donne, & Giovanni Fratelli, Verona, [1571].
> Small 8vo, 16 leaves, woodcut lion of Venice on title, some slight browning mainly of margins, modern boards.
> Not in Gollner.[2]

[1] Lorenzo Carpanè and Marco Menato, *Annali della tipografia veronese del Cinquecento*, Bibliotheca bibliographica Aureliana, 126, 139, 2 vols (Baden-Baden: Koerner, 1992–94).
[2] C. Göllner, *Turcica: die europäischen Türkendruck des XVI Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols (Bucarest: Editura Academiei RPR, 1961–78).

The cause and effect of the battle of Lepanto. £ 950.

Introducing his catalogue 21, the Director of Hesketh and Ward, Viscount Bangor, wrote:

> The following 68 items are all from the collection of Cardinal Ludovico de Torres, Archbishop of Monreale who lived in the Palazzo Lancellotti at Rome where Christie's now is — the fine sixteenth-century ceilings display his arms of a tower. He was largely responsible for the alliance which led to the victory over the Turks at Lepanto in 1571.[3]
> Of the 68 items, two are relevant to the present study:
> 8. BONTEMPO, Stefano. *Rime*, Venice, per Sebastian dalle Donne, & Giouanni fratelli, 1578. £400.
> 4to. 8 ff. An extraordinarily rare little collection of verse in various forms by an obscure Veronese poet. The work is dedicated to Marc'Antonio Rambaldo and is probably his only work in print. It is also one of a very few books printed by this partnership.
> Of course, 'Venice' here must be a misprint for Verona. The Dalle Donne brothers never published in Venice. The authorship and contents are entirely Veronese.
> 55. ROSSETTINO, Giovanni. *Rime* [...] *nella morte di madonna Martha sua diletta consorte*, Verona, per Sebastiano delle Donne, & Giouanni fratelli, 1579. £300.
> 4to. 18 ff. Woodcut device on title-page, very small repair in same leaf with slight damage to one letter, light browning and staining.
> Very rare poetical lament by the author for his recently deceased wife.[4]

Hitherto we have noted three additional Veronese imprints to the annals of Carpanè-Menato, all of books offered for sale in London about 1998–2000. A fourth then appeared in a lavishly produced volume entitled: *Manuscripts and Rare Books 15th-18th century*: *from the Collections of the Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation*. Catalogue compiled by Leonora Navari, Nicosia, 2010. The titlepage of every printed item is illustrated with an illustration in colour, and so we can soon see that the following items all come from the collection of the same Archbishop of Monreale: 33–47, 49, 58, 61, 63, 64: twenty books in all, and probably more if the Archbishop's signature does not always appear on the titlepage. No. 33 is new to Carpanè-Menato:

> Tutte le solennita et allegrezze fatte in Venetia, nel dare il Baston Generale, al Magnifico & Clariss. Sig. Hieronimo Zane, meritissimo Generale de l'Armata in Mare de la Illustrissima Signoria di Venetia. Con altri auisi notabili, circa la Nuoua guerra principiata da essi Signori, contra gl'Infideli. [Woodcut, the lion of Venice, with initials 'B. P.'] In Verona, Per Sebastian dalle Donne, & Giouanni Fratelli. 12mo. pp. [8].

The present situation regarding these four 'new' items is:

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[3] Luys (Ludovico) de Torres (1533-1609), descended from a Spanish family that had settled in Rome. Appointed Archbishop of Monreale, Sicily, in 1588.

[4] Giovanni Rossettino, who is not represented in the British Library, had already published at Padua in 1563 a short work entitled *Catalogo sopra li dottori che leggono nel studio di Padova* (Hesketh & Ward, catalogue 21, no. 54).

1. Stefano Mantovano.[5]
   Shapero (no. 50), now Navari (no. 49).
   In Nicosia.
2. Stefano Bontempo.
   Hesketh & Ward catalogue 21 (no. 8).
   Present location unknown.
3. Giovanni Rossettino.
   Hesketh & Ward 21 (no. 55).
   Present location unknown.
4. *Tutte le solennita et allegrezze* [...].
   Navari (no. 33).
   In Nicosia.

Finally, a note on the woodcut which is to be seen on the titlepages of nos. 1 and 4, and possibly of the others, which have not been reproduced. It is probably doubtful whether this cut, measuring 34 mm. square, should really be considered as a printer's device. It is unknown to Carpanè-Menato and to EDIT16.[6] The significance of the initials B. P. is likewise a mystery. Certainly the winged lion represents the Serenissima, Venice, yet this cut was apparently only ever used at Verona, and only by the one printing-house of Sebastiano and Giovanni Dalle Donne.

One of Sebastiano Dalle Donne's devices (CNCM 1219)

[5] Stefano Mantovano had been identified as Stefano Gionta of Brescia (Carpanè-Menato, nos. 66 and 727) by: Vincenzo Peroni, *Biblioteca bresciana* (Brescia: Nicolò Bettoni, 1818–23).

[6] EDIT 16 = Censimento nazionale delle edizioni italiane del xvi secolo. Each edition (*edizione*) and each printer's device (*marca*) is identified by a unique code consisting of a siglum and a number, e.g.: 'CNCE 1' = Censimento nazionale cinquecentine Edizioni; 'CNCM 1' = Censimento nazionale cinquecentine Marche.

II

An absurd entry appears in the *Index Aureliensis* at no. 134.449 for an edition of the poems of Catullus, Tibullus and Propertius allegedly printed at Bergamo by 'E. Ventura' in 1516.[7] All bibliographers with any interest in Italian printing know that the first book recorded as having been printed in Bergamo came remarkably late, in 1555, the printer being Gallo de' Galli.[8] The first really permanent, successful, and efficient printer at Bergamo was Comin Ventura, who did not begin printing until 1578.[9] Comin himself died in 1617, and his heirs, Valerio and Pietro, continued work until 1626. Thus we know of no member of the Ventura family whose name began with E. How did the Index Aureliensis arrive at this totally erroneous entry? The book itself is in the Biblioteca Comunale dell'Archiginnasio, Bologna (shelfmark 16.c.III.11), where I examined it on 15 October 1996.

I made notes at the time, but then did not think of publishing them. The edition is an octavo signed a-x in eights. The first leaf is wanting, and the verso of the last leaf bears a device which we will discuss shortly. This is followed by a manuscript page which has been taken at face value by the Index Aureliensis. It reads as follows:

> C. VALERII
> CATVLLI.
> ALBII
> TIBVLLI.
> SEXTI. AVRELII
> PROPERTII.
> INCASTA CARMINA.
> BERGOMI TYPIS | COMINI VENT. ET SOC. M.D.XVI.

Since I made these notes, the definitive bibliography of the Ventura firm has been published. An excellent piece of work it is, giving full descriptions of no less than 524 editions, plus a reduced reproduction of every titlepage.[10] The works of the three elegiac poets, in the order Tibullus, Catullus and Propertius, plus the *Silae* of Statius, were first printed at Venice by Vindelinus de Spira in 1472, followed by Venetian editions of 1491, 1493, 1500 and 1520 by other printers. The only exception of an edition printed outside Venice seems to be that of Reggio in 1481. In the order Catullus, Tibullus and Propertius,

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[7] *Index Aureliensis: Catalogus Librorum Sedecimo Saeculo Impressorum* (Aureliae Aquensis: Koerner, 1965–), part 1, book vii, p. 206.

[8] Gallo de' Galli printed about ten editions at Bergamo between 1555 and 1569. He was followed by Vincenzo Nicolini da Sabbio from Brescia, who printed perhaps four editions in 1577–78. See Fernanda Ascarelli-Menato, *La tipografia del '500 in Italia* (Firenze: Olschki, 1989), p. 166. I have seen none of these editions, since not one of them is in the British Library or Cambridge. I have not looked for copies elsewhere.

[9] Ascarelli-Menato, pp. 166-67.

[10] Gianmaria Savoldelli, *Comino Ventura: annali tipografici dello stampatore a Bergamo dal 1578 al 1616*, Biblioteca di bibliografia italiana, cxci (Firenze: Olschki, 2011).

we begin with the edition (GW 6387) which was paid for by Johannes de Colonia and Johannes Manthen at Venice in 1475, but is believed to have been printed for them at Milan by Philippus de Lavagnia: this attribution. however, is somewhat uncertain. Then there were Aldine editions in 1502 and 1515, and one by Melchior Sessa, in 1531. The publication of the three elegiac Roman poets in the first century of printing was almost exclusively a Venetian monopoly.

The first Italian edition which fits the signature collation of the imperfect copy in Bologna is that of Giovanni Griffio, Venice, 1553.[11] On the titlepage is the device of a griffon (CNCM 39) which is reproduced by Zappella,[12] but is there attributed only to the printer Giovanni Farri, as used in 1540-1548. This has the motto printed down both sides: VIRTVTE DVCE ‖ COMITE FORTVNA, in italic capitals (fig. 1).

What Zappella lists under Giovanni Griffi il Vecchio (no. 706, CNCM 41), is a larger griffon device, of the same design as CNCM 39, but with the motto: POCO VAL LA VERTV ‖ SENZA FORTVNA

Figure 1 (Zappella 710; CNCM 39)

Figure 2 (Zappella 698; CNCM 390)

The fact that the device on the titlepage of Catullus, Tibullus and Propertius with the imprint Venetiis, Ioan. Gryphius excudebat, is a variant of CNCM 41 and that it was used by Giovanni Griffio (hence the choice of the griffon) is not noted by Zappella. On the verso of the last leaf is a device (Zappella 698, CNCM 390) (fig. 2) which also shows that this is the edition wrongly ascribed to Bergamo in 1516.

Very few editions of the classical Latin authors appear to have been printed in Bergamo either in the sixteenth or even the seventeenth century: I have noticed two examples, Horatius Flaccus, *Poemata omnia*, Bergamo: Comin Ventura & Socii, 1587 (Savoldelli 58) and Ovid, *De' rimedi d'amore*, translated by Angelo Ingegneri, Bergamo: Comin Ventura, 1604 (Savoldelli 342).

[11] EDIT 16 C2337, CNCE 10363.
[12] Giuseppina Zappella, *Le marche dei tipografi e degli editori italiani del Cinquecento*, 2 vols (Milano: Editrice bibliografica, 1986), no. 710.

Thus it is not easy to see why the writer of the non-sensical manuscript title thought of Bergamo, and it did not occur to him that Comin Ventura was not even born in 1516.[13] All we can say in his favour is that he knew that Comin Ventura was a printer at Bergamo: perhaps he was himself a native of that town. His use of the phrase 'incasta carmina' is not, of course, taken from the printed edition itself, which would hardly advertise the unclean, immoral, sometimes lewd nature of the poems contained in the book. The more usual (and correct) form of the Latin adjective is 'incesta'.

The wrong information provided by the writer of the manuscript title was taken at face value by the person who catalogued the book, as the old card of the 'Frati-Sorbelli' catalogue clearly shows (fig. 3).[14]

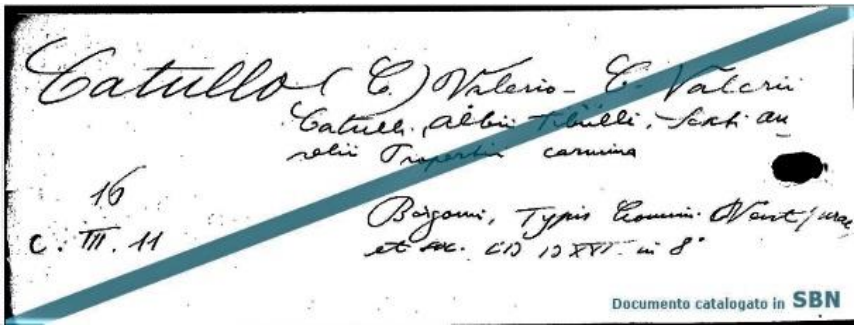

Figure 3

The compiler of this section of the *Index Aureliensis*, simply copied the information contained in the old catalogue card, unaware of the fact that he too was compounding a felony.

We have thus successfully disposed of an edition of the three elegiac Latin poets 'printed at Bergamo in 1516'.

[13] Comin Ventura did not enjoy a long life. The exact year of his birth is unknown. He was born at Sabbio, a small village in the Val Sabbia, near Salò, about 1550, and died at Bergamo on 7 January 1617 (Savoldelli, p. xxiv).
[14] The digitized Frati-Sorbelli catalogue is available at <http://badigit.comune.bologna.it/FratiSorbelli> [accessed 9 September 2017].

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